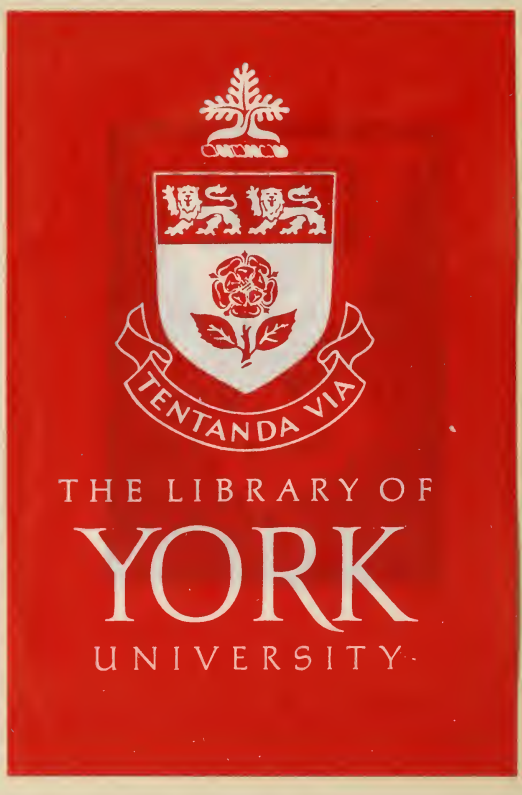
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THE POLAR ADVENTURE

MALMGREN

Translated from the Norwegian by
Asta and Rowland Kenney

THE POLAR ADVENTURE

THE "ITALIA" TRAGEDY SEEN AT CLOSE QUARTERS

by

ODD ARNESEN

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THE CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I

Which tells why the *Italia* expedition was undertaken ; of the many and great plans ; the dangers ; and a sixteen days' voyage to Spitsbergen, looking for Wilkins and Eilson, and for General Nobile.

When Roald Amundsen and his friends, Lincoln Ellsworthy, Leif Dietrichson, Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen, Oskar Omdal, and the German, Feucht, lay locked in the polar ice 88° north for three bitter weeks during the summer of 1925, our polar explorer had ample opportunities to study conditions with regard to the value of aeroplanes in furthering polar exploration. The terrible weeks of superhuman toil spent in making, with primitive tools, a place from which to take off, proved abundantly that the aeroplane was not the most suitable means of progress in these inhospitable and capricious regions. Before the six brave men were able to escape from death's embrace, they must clear away between four and five hundred tons of snow and ice in order to prepare the final starting-place on the masses of screw-ice and loose ice-floes. Long before the first aeroplane flight in polar regions was made, Amundsen had considered the question of employing an airship on his tours of exploration, as this seemed to offer many advantages. It could be kept stationary above the spot he wished to explore, and, even if the motor failed or the petrol gave out, it would keep in the air for a considerable time. But when one belongs to a nation of only two and three-quarter millions, lacking great resources and generous patrons, one must be thankful for the next best, if the best is not available. And that was Amundsen's attitude in 1925, for he never admitted defeat. Having finished that

year's polar flight, which was meant as a reconnaissance, he immediately began to prepare the next step in the conquest of the polar regions. And this time it *had* to be an airship. As in the previous year, Lincoln Ellsworthy, that idealistic American, came to the rescue, and in 1926 made possible the flight of an airship across the Polar Sea. But where could the airship be obtained? In England? No. In Germany, the home of airships? No—the enormous Zeppelins were too big and too expensive, and would take too long to build, and Amundsen, as was his wont, must act quickly. Time was short, and he must strike while the iron was hot. Italy, however, was building semi-rigid airships; so there it was bought, and our country got its first airship, the *Norge*. The designer of the airship, Colonel —as he then was—Umberto Nobile, was accepted as its pilot. As is well known, the expedition, which flew the Norwegian flag, was first called the "Amundsen-Ellsworthy Trans-Polar Flight, 1926." Norwegian initiative had brought it into existence. It was created by Amundsen's genius and strength of will; it was formed by him after a long and strenuous life as polar explorer, always brilliantly supported by his able assistants. Just before the start from Rome, Nobile's name was added. The *Norge* tour, the first trans-polar flight, was in its way a pioneer undertaking, a feat which will rank high in polar history. After the happy landing at Teller arose the deplorable differences between the Italian Colonel on the one hand, and Amundsen and Ellsworthy on the other. I have no wish unnecessarily to resuscitate these old unpleasant affairs, but we cannot ignore the fact that it was *after* the successful *Norge* flight, and after the controversies really began to rage, that General Umberto Nobile discovered that he himself had a special work to perform in polar regions—where none may reap laurels cheaply.

General Nobile was anxious to play his own game,

and so the airship *Italia* was built at the airship works of the Italian State near Rome. The *Italia* was almost the counterpart of the *Norge*, but with the addition of certain improvements based on the experience gained during the adventurous trip from Spitsbergen to Teller. Immediately before the start from Milan, the General revealed his plans to the Milan Geographical Society, which institution bore part of the cost of the expedition. He told them how he was going to explore further Nicholas II Land, discovered by the Russian Vilkitsky fifteen years previously ; how he was going to chart and photograph the coasts, and land a couple of scientists to take observations.

Unfortunately, this goal was never reached : the *Italia* did not even get near it, but was forced by fog and contrary winds to turn back. The next flight had the North Pole for its aim, and again the intention was to land scientists—a somewhat novel idea—but this was not achieved. The third voyage was planned to reach the northern coast of Greenland, where, amongst other things, the existence of the mysterious Crocker Land was to be enquired into. The disaster put a stop to this plan. There may be some value now, after the event, in examining the address Nobile gave to the Geographical Society in Milan, for it reveals the difference between Norwegian and Italian ways of thought, and provides us with certain data when considering the disaster of the *Italia* on Friday, March 25th, 1928. Nobile's address is here quoted from Mussolini's paper, the *Popolo d'Italia*:

" Many persons have asked," said Nobile, " why we are going up there. Was not the one successful trip sufficient ? Was not that which was done at that time sufficient for Italy ? And would it not be better to give up this new undertaking ? Thus they have spoken. Even our good friends, and persons sincerely sympathising with us, have spoken thus because they believed that our flight would be

an approximate repetition of the expedition of 1926, which from the point of view of aeronautics had a happy result, due entirely to us Italians. I, however, look upon the expedition of 1926 merely as a beginning of a new era in polar exploration. I remember that on the day we arrived in Teller—and I confess to you that, after two days of flying and ceaseless toil, we had lived through a period of anxiety and strain which had exhausted our energy, physical and moral—on that day, I say, my thought was this : ' Now it is done ; we will never do it again ! ' But nevertheless, two days later, when fatigue had gone, my thoughts were again busy with the question of a repetition, of supplementing that which had already been done; with the question of study and research, so that the fruits of our work might be reaped.

" We have shown how this undertaking can be executed. We prepared it, and we Italians assumed the entire responsibility for it. And then I said to myself, ' Why, then, should we not also reap the fruits of the work ? Why not we ourselves run the whole risk and achieve the final and complete exploration of the polar regions ? "

" Since that moment this persistent thought has governed my mind. I returned. I had a conversation with *il Duce*, and he gave me his approval."

Then Nobile spoke of the four million square kilometres of unexplored polar tracts which still exist, and where land might possibly be found. He mentioned his plan of starting from Spitsbergen on a first tour over unexplored parts, where he felt certain he would find land, after which he would return to New Aalesund.

" This," he continued, " increases the difficulties and dangers confronting us. We have foreseen everything, even the possibility that we may have no luck, even the possibility of disaster. I will state the position exactly as it is.

Probably it is a strong point in me that I dare to reckon with even the worst of possibilities. And we have foreseen the possibility of disaster and complete defeat. But we will not be satisfied with what we gained the first time. We want to achieve more. We want to enter on this undertaking just because it is an uncertain and dangerous one. For, had this been an easy task, others would already have forestalled us and achieved it.

" But if in the near future it should transpire that our undertaking has failed ; that disaster has overtaken us in spite of all that we have done to prevent it ; and if the good wishes of all Italian hearts should become a power to keep our memory alive, maybe someone or other from those northern countries would say, ' There you see. We warned you beforehand. Your race does not breed polar explorers.' And that seems to me to be almost the greatest danger we have to face."

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There is no doubt that the interest in this polar expedition—the first one Nobile undertook on his own responsibility—was very slight *before* the disaster. Even papers of world renown looked twice at their shillings, dollars, and crowns when the suggestion was made to send special correspondents to Spitsbergen, that out-of-the-way group of islands which has of late attracted growing attention as a centre of polar exploration. Probably the great world was by now suffering from a kind of polar boredom.

A person setting out for the realm of snow and ice, for the northern home of fogs, therefore harboured no great or dazzling expectations. In the month of April it is sheer luck if in Tromsö one finds a ship bound for the coasts of Spitsbergen. But even so early in the year it does sometimes happen, and this April luck was with me. This

augured well for the long voyage. The departure from Tromsö was to take place on a Friday, but a goodly lot of superstition still clings to our modern sailors, wherefore they sent a deputation to the boss and asked him to postpone the departure till Saturday. " Very well," said the skipper, " then we leave on Saturday—at five minutes past midnight." But it was a good deal later than that when at last we got under way.

Landlubbers find it difficult to understand the men of the polar seas, with their philosophy of, " It will all come right, though we may not live to see it." We are used to time-tables, railway guides, bus routes. " Wait and see," say the men of the North, and often success attends this attitude. Now about this Friday business. " That is quite correct," says my friend in Tromsö. " Once I set out on a Friday, against the wish of the skipper, and when we got right out into the sound we lost our false keel, the motor ran hot, one of the crew fell into the hold and was almost knocked to pieces, so there you see. Further, if hunters and fishermen are to have any luck, then those at home must not scrub their floors before the men are well away, for, if they do, ill-luck is sure to follow."

We sailed on a Saturday, but it might just as well have been an unlucky Friday. The first thing that happened was that we stove in a plank of another sloop in getting away. After a day in the sound the skipper got his finger badly crushed in the motor, which was not on its best behaviour. Then our troubles began in earnest. In the sound we had a delightful following wind, but out in the skerries there was a stiff breeze from the north, and the tub to which we had trusted our lives, the *Mina* of Tromsö, was as round as the *Maud*[1] and almost equally strong, but as for going right against the wind—no thanks !

Mina is not of those who are disposed to work hard for

[1] Amundsen's old ship.

THE " MINA "

their food ; she believes in comfort. We put to sea to give the lady a trial, ran into a snow-squall, breaker followed breaker, the motor began to protest—and when we were right on the skerries it petered out, mum as the dead. In a minute the jib was hoisted, and through the driving snow we saw, a couple of yards in front of us, skerries and shoals with cataracts of icy brine breaking over them.

" It will all come right, though we may not live to see it." There it was again ! And for two days and nights we lay waiting behind the mole at the fishing-stations. Up in the mountains above us the snow whirled in its wanton dance, the cutting north wind was anything but gracious, and even there in the harbour behind the sheltering mole the sea was capped with white.

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It is spring in the Arctic Sea. And what a spring ! At home in Norway the transition can often be sweeping enough, with rushing rivers and bursting buds along the mountain slopes, but there spring carries beauty in its lap, gives birth to new life. Here ! Here reigns annihilation.

. . . . . .

In a strong south-westerly breeze we hoisted what clouts the *Mina* possessed. She hadn't an ounce of sailing-power, said the mate. And what was the use of pocket handkerchiefs like these, anyway ? The breeze freshened, became a storm, hooted, shrieked, threatened, bullied us. " I will break you, crush you, you miserable crawling specks of mankind ! " And as far as possible the howling forces kept their word. The jib was split in an instant, while my lady easily and elegantly shook the mizen off. The motor thumped with a will, with the wind following behind—it

seemed to like that kind of wind. A mighty groan rose in our wake, as if a giant kelpie were sighing. The decks were awash with greyish-green water, flung in ceaseless cascades across rigging and ropes, and in the wink of an eye railings, deck, and rigging stood as if carved from a giant block of ice. In the fo'c'sle the water poured into the men's bunks. The cabin-boy, only fifteen years old and on his first trip, whispered to the mate, " My bunk is so wet that I'm afraid we are going to be drowned." " It's only a splash, but if we did get drowned we'd be no wetter," was the reply. The boy had caught a cold, and was coughing. " Affectation, sonny," declared the bos'n ; " but I *have* started making you a coffin, you silly sea-corpse, you. You go below and see if it fits you."

On the second night of the storm the Sea-corpse—for naturally the name stuck to him—was standing in the companion, with the doors banging about his ears, when with a muffled groan he slid down the two-man-high stairs and remained in a heap at the foot. Neptune had caught him in his net, and refused to release him until we reached the calm sea at the edge of the ice.

. . . . . .

Spring in the Arctic Sea. *Mina* is ready for a flirtation ; she minces and struts along the crested waves, bobbing like a merry cork. We are nearing the ice ; the swell is heavy, and gives one the sensation of being on a switch-back railway. The snow-clad ice-heaps, looking like sculpture of things tortured and twisted, almost blind one with their whiteness. And during these first days of May a miracle occurs : God gives His sun to shine both night and day. The open water between the drifting floes is turned by the miracle into miniature lakes of liquid gold ; it is like entering fairyland. One feels happy. Outside

the realm of the ice the ocean may bluster and thunder, but here we are on hallowed ground, where Neptune's power cannot reach us. We crash against ice-floes now and then, and *Mina* says "Bump," which means, "Oh, *you* are out for a walk, are you?" An endless waste of ice as far as the eye can reach, the only occasional break in the silence coming when the swell rubs floe against floe.

"Ho, boys!" the man in the crow's-nest suddenly sings out. "Seal in sight!" There is great commotion on deck; the rifles are brought out and put ready in the bow. Now all must be quiet, so as not to scare the seal away. Also, it is useless to approach them in such a way that the exhaust gas tickles their nostrils, for they don't like that odour, and to escape it they will simply slip vertically down into the greyish-green deeps. We are getting closer now; not a sound on board disturbs their peace. One of the seals is glancing this way and that, but without suspicion, roasting its hide in the first midnight sun of the year. Yes, it is glorious to be alive! Then, from a distance of fifty yards, cracks a shot—another, and a third for safety's sake. Blood begins to trickle, and then another bullet sends it spurting on to the snow-covered ice. *Mina* bumps her nose against the floe, and two of the crew jump down. The flensing-knives complete their work with lightning speed. In one minute skin and blubber, and a good slice of meat for frying, have been removed from the animal which but a few minutes before lay basking in the sun. A second one does not give in so easily. It has been shot twice, and is mortally wounded. It pretends to be stone dead, but when the ship is two yards away it lifts its head, summons its last ounce of strength, and noiselessly slips into the sea. A broad stripe of red colours its wake; it dives and disappears. "And that is how we squander our fifty-kroner pieces in polar seas," says the mate. But no

sooner has he spoken than the dying seal bobs up again. In a couple of minutes two men stand ready in the lifeboat, and the animal's fate is settled.

And so time passes, with a little occasional hunting, and at the end of a couple of days we have caught about thirty seals of various kinds. (A real catch is a hundred animals a day.) We eat and sleep, or occasionally sleep and eat, and talk about wind and weather and when we can expect to get a glimpse of Spitsbergen's coast, and the days go by and the nights as well.

To-day, the seventh day since leaving Tromsö—this is the veriest America-trip !—we ought to get a glimpse of land. But the day draws to its close without our hope being fulfilled. The steward wears a peculiar grin next morning when he is laying the table for breakfast ; his face tells us plainly that we will have to wait for the sight of land. But the following day the keenest eye on board discovers it—a mountain-top somewhere is glittering, and towards evening we sight South Cape, Horntind, by Horn Sound, Bell Sound, and the yawning Ice Fjord. Once more we enter the drift-ice, ten thousands of floes, ice, ice everywhere. *Mina* bumps and bangs, groans and pushes. Again we hunt ; there is the rapid word of command and the piff-paff of guns. But now we begin our hunt for other game—for Wilkins and Eilson, and for Nobile.

At last, after ten long days, we reach the edge of the ice in Green Harbour, where I hope to find Wilkins and Eilson before any other journalist can get to them.

. . . . . .

The motor had spoiled much of the trip. It is a common saying in Tromsö : " If you want to learn patience, get married. If that doesn't do it, then buy a motor." And *our* motor was certainly as bad as the plague. A wag

ICE ON THE WEST COAST OF SPITSBERGEN

proposed that we should lift it out of the ship, put it in the sea, and see whether it would float. If it did, we would restore it to grace and consider it good. But it was not the motor alone that had many doubtful pleasures in store for us ; the very spring in Spitsbergen met us in a way peculiar to itself. A few yards from the edge of the ice, *Mina*, in her wantonness, ran aground, and there she remained, bumping, at an angle of forty degrees. But that was not all. A savage snowstorm from the south enveloped us in the folds of its impenetrable veil. We *had* to get ashore, the four of us—an American film photographer, two wireless telegraphists bound for Green Harbour, and myself. The ice heaved under our feet ; snow from the air and snow from the ice whipped our faces and bit our ears. It was literally true that we could not see our own hands before us. We waded through snow up to our waists, crawled on all fours more than once, could hardly see each other, and were anything but certain about our direction. The distance we had to cover to reach the nearest inhabited place—the Dutch mining camp Barentsburg—usually takes half an hour. This time it took three hours, what with crawling and walking at a snail's pace.

But in the quiet mining camp, where only a couple of watchmen were stationed, we found the two heroic flyers on a visit from the wireless station which lay farther in along the fjord. Most unostentatious indeed was their demeanour after their epoch-making flight. They talked about their nerve-racking tour, over parts which no human eye had ever beheld, as if it were a simple and everyday affair, in keeping with the slight smile that ended their story. My countryman, the Norwegian-American Carl B. Eilson, has a boyish, fresh manner, is careless of speech, and employs a wonderfully broad Norwegian dialect. Occasionally he is stumped for a word. " River—

what is the Norwegian for that, now?" Flying is his very life, but not just flying anything or anywhere. He wants to fly where he feels it is worth while.

From the happy gathering with the few Dutchmen living in Barentsburg I walked home with the flyers in the midnight sun, they on their " snow-troughs " and I on ski. Their snow-troughs were so convenient that with them they could easily race a man with mere skis, except when going downhill.

It was six o'clock in the morning, and brilliant sunshine in this realm of whiteness. I presumed the flyers were going to bed now. " I have never had such a wonderfully quiet time as here," said Eilson. " What a perfectly Arcadian life ! The only thing I have done is to write two thousand words about our flight " (those two thousand words brought him ten thousand dollars) " and put the tarpaulin round the engine."

I used our tour on ski that morning as an opportunity for an interview with Wilkins, who was full of his latest plans, drew the contours of the future programme for polar exploration, and was amiability personified. Now it was reasonable to assume that I was free from competition in these barren wastes ; but not at all. The day after my interview appeared in my own paper, a rival published a similar but more comprehensive interview with Wilkins, including several new items, the whole thing elaborated. The interview began with the words, " From our special correspondent on board the *Mina*." And the paper concerned had no correspondent at all on board the sloop, and nobody else from the ship had spoken with Wilkins ! It was most mysterious. But the mystery was solved later : Wilkins himself had, on request, sent the interview. One learns self-help in the Arctic !

The flyer's voice became very tender as he spoke of his machine, which had been built by a young Scot by the

ICE DRIFTING ALONG THE COAST

name of Lockheed. Wilkins came down on the ice to show it to me from every angle, and from inside as well. " Ah, it is not a bad machine, old man," he said. " Since our flight they have sold twenty of this type. Ours was number two."

From our little party Wilkins went home to work on his book. The typewriter was tapping night and day at the short-wave station of Spitsbergen, where the beds of the flyers and the library of the station took up so much of the modest space that we had to sit on the edge of the beds when we wanted to chat. I was permitted to look through a whole mountain of congratulations that had been sent to the flyers. There were greetings from such well-known polar explorers as our own Nansen and Amundsen, from innumerable geographical societies all over the world, messages from Royalty, and invitations from practically every country of the globe. Among the messages was one, in English, from the newspaper *Uroa*, of Longyear City, which I quote here.

To Green Harbour from Point Barrow
you flew like a sunlit arrow,
and landed without fright
after a glorious flight
in ice and polar night—
in the light of midnight sun
astonished polar bear staring
up against the soaring—
nao never seen such sight
in the daybreak's light.
Welcome, then, from the skies ;
to the same will rise
soon your famous names.
Welcome, then, to the north ;
stars and stripes
the deed is worth.

One's troubles in polar seas are numerous as grains of sand on the shore. While *Mina* lay waiting for us for four

days in Green Harbour, the ice set in and gave her a squeeze she will remember for life. Thick "steel-ice" settled under her high keel, and pressed and squeezed until the poor craft groaned aloud. From midships astern there was no ice at all, but the bow seemed caught all the more firmly. There was nothing to be done but set to with axes and crowbars and hew the ship free. Every man went to work with a will, and, after a day and a night of exhausting toil, the *Mina* slipped out into open water.

The four days spent in Green Harbour in the company of the fourteen local inhabitants, which included a young lady of eighteen months and the two flyers, were most pleasant. Then came the time for departure. The film photographer, the new wireless telegraphist (who was going to the New Aalesund station to replace a man who had succumbed, in a spring blizzard, one hundred yards from the houses), and I set out for the ice-edge of Green Harbour, where we found our indispensable *Mina* several thousand yards off the edge of the permanent ice. Between this edge and our friend there was a veritable crater of screw-ice ; blocks of all sizes up to five yards were jammed together in one mass by the north wind, pressed into union by tremendous force. One block lay piled on top of another, the deep cracks along the edges being covered with treacherous and deceptive snow. It was a case of zig-zagging, of jumping, crawling, sometimes on foot and sometimes on skis. We had a team of six dogs and a sledge to freight along our belongings. Occasionally we fell into the water through the snow-covered cracks, and when we reached the ship the floes tore apart. The dogs were on one floe, the sledge on another. The one with the dogs pushed off, and, as the sledge had been fastened to a cable on board, all the dogs ultimately went into the sea. To save them, the dog-driver, a Dutch youth named van Dongen,

had to jump in, and most of us found it an altogether wet experience.

After another night and day at sea, sixteen days after leaving Tromsö, we reached New Aalesund. Here we encountered the next flyer of the year, General Nobile. But, as Kipling says, that is another story.

CHAPTER II

Which tells of the Italians as ice-men ; of an unlucky Friday start ; of Italian faith and superstition ; of the failure of the flight to Nicholas II Land ; of the *Italia's* narrow escape from colliding with a mountain in Novaya Zemlya ; of Nobile's hectoring of the journalists ; of preparations for the fateful flight to the North Pole ; and of a scene in the hangar before the start.

We islanders of Spitsbergen caught our first glimpse of the polar airship, the *Italia*, on Sunday morning, May 6th. From the deck of our ship, the *Mina*, at that time lying in Green Harbour, we observed the airship fighting wind and weather, unsteady as a drunkard, but slowly advancing. A head wind was handling the airship roughly, and it did not augur well for the coming flights in polar regions. We heard subsequently that Nobile indeed contemplated returning to Vadsö after the airship had reached Spitsbergen, as there appeared to be little hope of effecting a landing. The mountain-top was veiled in a woolly and clammy mist, but now and then an arrow of sunshine shot across the white snow-fields and the glittering peaks and cliffs. The landing and the housing of the airship took seven weary hours, but it was finally accomplished.

The heavy and unwieldly ship of the expedition, the *Città di Milano*—formerly the German cable-ship *Oldenburg*—had arrived in New Aalesund in King's Bay shortly before, and had prepared to receive the *Italia*. Right from the beginning the Italians proved themselves to be poor ice-men, and in these god-forsaken tracts, where only the local inhabitants and men well trained for polar conditions can hope to win through by dint of ceaseless toil, they were soon found manifestly wanting. No living soul could

expect the sunburned Italians to be polar experts or ice-people. Soft, smiling, and sunny is their country, and it is difficult to reconcile the idea of this nation with snow and ice. They have their alpine troops, of course, but any thought of snow and ice stops at that. When the *Città di Milano* arrived in New Aalesund in King's Bay in the beginning of May, the fjord-ice was still lying some distance outside the quay. The ship carried a considerable amount of goods for the *Italia*, among other things four thousand five hundred heavy gas-cylinders. There were motors, spare parts, provisions, etc., and it was a matter of some importance to get to the quay as soon as possible. The airship might arrive any day, and the start was to be made as soon as possible, for it was already getting late in the year for such an undertaking. On board the *Città* there was a man named Gallo, who called himself an ice-expert, and who was said to have spent some time in Alaska, and he collected a whole swarm of sailors, well wrapped up in cumbersome sheepskin coats. The *Città* had two hundred bombs on board for blasting away the ice. The result of the whole affair was a number of holes, and to effect the necessary passage they had to ask for assistance from the Norwegians. The miners, who know their job and are accustomed to local conditions, were asked by the chief of the *Città* to open up a channel of water wide enough for the ship to get to the quay and discharge its cargo. Three shifts, each of seven men, set to work, and in three days a passage of fifteen metres broad and a little more than one kilometre in length had been made. The ice was a couple of metres thick, and it took one and a half tons of dynamite to break it up. Water and pieces of ice spurted heavenward, the noise was ear-splitting, and even far away the ice trembled. While this work was going on the *Città* was to try to knock loose an ice-floe, eighteen hundred by four hundred metres in area, to get nearer to land. There was a Norwegian ice-pilot

THE FIRST ICE ON THE WEST COAST OF SPITSBERGEN

on board who wanted to do it in his own way, but the chief of the *Città*, Commandant Romagna Manoya, wanted it done his way, with the result that very soon the open water was again packed. The pilot thereupon left the bridge and let the Commandant manage the whole affair, but not many minutes had elapsed before the chief came down and asked if the pilot wouldn't be so kind as to come up on the bridge for a moment, and have a look round and give them his advice. " Well, if you want my view I should do so and so," said the pilot. He then took the pilot's advice, and soon the floe was loose.

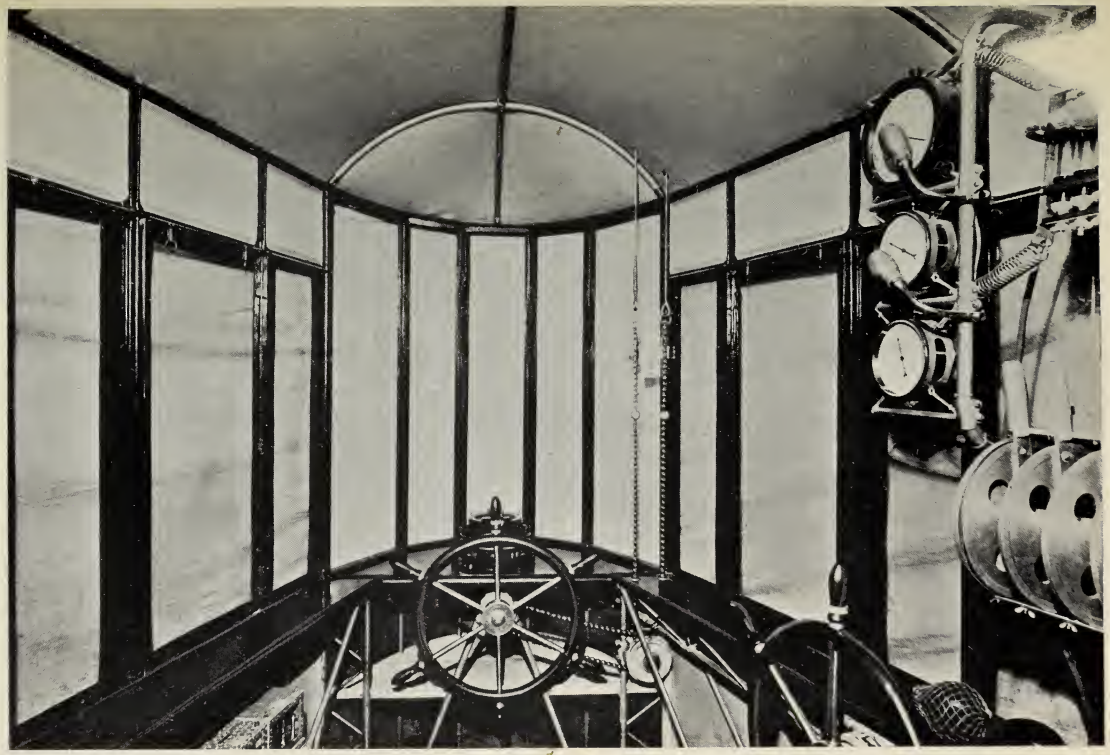
Once the ice-anchor of the *Città* had to be shifted. The ice had begun to rot, floe after floe drifted out into the fjord, and the ship must be moved to the edge of the permanent ice. On a Norwegian boat this work is generally carried out by two men who jump down on the ice, pick up the ice-anchor, move it, and fix it. But on this occasion it was a more elaborate affair. More than forty men seized anchor and rope, while ashore a couple of officers and several non-commissioned officers, armed with megaphones, yelled commands which echoed from mountain to mountain : " *Forza—forza—wira—wira—piano—piano—forza.*"

The Italians were a long time before they got a real respect for the ice, whether it was fjord-ice or the land-ice itself. When the relief expedition went northward from New Aalesund there were not a few Italians on board the *Braganza*, which was hired by the *Città*, and several of them were at pains to teach old skipper Svendsen, who knew the polar seas inside out, what to do. For one thing, they could not understand why he often set a course due south when their goal lay due north. " Our course is north," they objected. " You are going south—your course is wrong." In the end these modern ice-men became such a nuisance that the skipper was obliged to forbid them the bridge,

request them to mind their own affairs, and to leave it to him to find a way through the ice.

. . . . . .

They were motley days, those immediately preceding the various starts, as were also those between the starts. No peace day or night, always awaiting the something that might happen. Not that it was difficult to discover when a start was imminent, for everybody and everything put an extra spurt on for hours beforehand. People were running about, the tractor moved more quickly than was its wont from the quay to the hangar—that magnificent building raised by Amundsen in 1926 for the *Norge*, with its impressive dimensions of more than a hundred yards in length and thirty yards breadth and height, and its colossal tarpaulin shutters. Until the last minute, gas-cylinders, chocolate, pemmican, oil, personal flying-kits, boxes of biscuits, and every conceivable thing connected with such a tour were brought up. And it was not a silent show, either. Chattering, singing, gesticulating groups discussed what ought to be done and how it ought to be done, until one of the officers at last decided that things had gone far enough and ordered the men to their tasks. The composition of the personnel was anything but ideal. The members of the crew were the queerest conglomeration of warring opinions. Some of them were fanatical Fascists who shot up like rockets and saluted in Fascist manner whenever the General appeared at the staff mess of the mining camp, while the Fascism of some others was lukewarm, and yet others were entirely uninterested in the question. If the sailors were asked whether they were Fascists, they unanimously cried, " *Neva, neva.*" If they were asked whether they felt enthusiastic for Mussolini, whether the dictator had made them happier, they replied by turning their



INTERIOR OF GONDOLA ON THE "ITALIA"

thumbs downwards, as did their forefathers in ancient Rome.

During such an undertaking everything ought to be voluntary as far as possible, and there was nothing here to prove it an advantage that an expedition of this sort should be military throughout. Commands alone are of little avail ; everybody must know his place and understand what he has to do, and herein lies one of the explanations of the belated starts which cost the *Italia* so much fine weather. If the start was fixed for, say, the early evening, it was never effected until ten or twelve hours later. With the bogey of the advanced season before them, every start was made as hastily as possible, but delay seemed, nevertheless, unavoidable. Although the crew of the *Città* numbered 230, there often appeared to be a shortage of men. It was their method of work that was clumsy and inefficient. A Norwegian journalist who mentioned this fact in one of his articles was put " on the mat " by the chief of the *Città*, who maintained that his men worked like heroes, and that he would like to see men who could do more or better. On one occasion the Commandant gave me the odd information that those of his men who hailed from the south of Italy, from Naples and thereabouts, were more efficient in the snow and ice of northern latitudes than the Italians from the mountainous regions. Although the *Città* had more than its full complement of men, Nobile had to ask repeatedly for the assistance of fifty men from the mining camp.

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Before it had spent many days in Amundsen's roomy hangar, the *Italia* was taken out for the first start. Probably no-one knew where they were going, for Nobile's course depended upon wind and weather conditions. Friday, May 11th, about eight o'clock in the morning, the *Italia*

set out on its very first arctic trip. The original intention was to start earlier in the morning or during the previous night, but there was a slight fall of snow and clouds hung round the mountain-tops. Many and various things were stowed into the airship : snow-troughs adorned with little Italian flags, solid Norwegian ski-sledges, rubber boats, corned beef, boiled eggs, thermos flasks containing coffee and tea, fruit, marmalade, chianti, huge fur-coats, rifles and cartridges, petrol sufficient for a tour of six thousand kilometres. Nobile spent the evening preceding the start on board the *Città* studying hydrography ; Malmgren was occupied with his hundreds of weather reports from all over the world ; and the Geophysical Institute in Tromsö was sending reports on which the whole undertaking depended.

At last the start was made, and on land as well as in the pilot's cabin and in the motor gondolas all faces smiled broadly. Polar explorers soon acquire the virtue of patience, but it naturally takes some little time for beginners. Now the atmosphere in the mining camp itself seemed to improve, and everybody drew a sigh of relief at the thought of the happy departure of the *Italia*. There would, at any rate, be a rest, even though the airship might have to be shepherded on its further progress through the air. We guessed and calculated as to where it was making for—Nicholas II Land or the Pole ? And what sort of weather would they meet there north, and what sort of wind ? About noon it began to snow. What would happen now ? Would Nobile continue, and, if so, whither ? At half-past two in the afternoon the message ran like wildfire through the mining camp : the *Italia* will soon be back—the *Città* has asked for assistance from the mine. And soon it was manifest to all the 167 inhabitants that the airship really was returning, for just before four o'clock it came sailing proudly and elegantly over our heads. The weather was now fine, dead calm, and with occasional sunshine. The

THE "ITALIA" RETURNING TO NEW AALESUND, KING'S BAY, AFTER THE FIRST EIGHT HOURS' FLIGHT

pilot of the airship, Captain Mariano, landed his craft somewhat abruptly, and for a moment it looked as if the tail would hit the ground. The rudder was saved, but the motor gondola at the stern hit the ground so hard that its carriage was smashed, and major repairs were required.

It transpired that the airship had got into a thick fog on the trip, tried to go eastward, but had found visibility too bad, and had then contemplated a western course towards Greenland. But it gave that up too. It tried an altitude of a hundred meters, rose to a thousand, but the result was the same, and the *Italia* had got no farther than the north of Spitsbergen when it turned back. Not one of the Italians doubted that the unfortunate start was due to its being made on a Friday, which is a particularly bad day for flying. (Our own sailors will not put to sea on such an evil day.) The Italians are strong both in faith and in superstition, especially the latter. Before Nobile left for his polar flight, Madame Nobile besought him not to drop the Pope's cross on the Pole, but to wait until the last tour—the third one, which had Greenland for its goal. As a wind-up to all the flights it was certain to bring luck. But, as originally intended, the cross was dropped at the Pole, so naturally all went wrong. Besides, it was on a Friday that the disaster occurred !

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Again there was a pause—if this mercurial state of apprehension that the airship might leave at any moment could be called a pause. Wind and weather and the Geophysical Institute in Tromsö and Finn Malmgren would decide when the next start was to be made. When Malmgren was asked when the next departure would take place, his reply was : " You get us three or four days of high pressure in the polar regions, and then we'll vamoose, to the great joy of you journalists." And with that we had to

be content and wait for the coveted high pressure. If we snatched half an hour's sleep, the drone of the motor was sure to make us jump up again, while an industrious tractor cheated us more than once. Everything was turned upside down ; day became night and night became day. It was a matter of waiting, and one day, when a few of us were hanging round the hangar before one of these supposed starts, Finn Malmgren said to us : " You are having a rotten time and we are having a rotten time. You cannot get away and we cannot get away." I am sure the flyers were as keen to get away as we were to see the airship leave, and it was small wonder that one day a journalist received from his paper the following telegram : " Why does not the *Italia* start ? " The correspondent replied : " It really isn't my fault."

The winches on board the heavy and gloomy *Città* whirred and shrieked, and they did not lack for a merry accompaniment from a couple of hundred of Italian throats. An ardent tractor bumped up and down through the snow, disappeared behind the drifts, and shoved its nose out again the next instant. It was pulling a load of heavy gas-cylinders with which to feed the airship. Hundreds of shiny cans of petrol were carted the $1\frac{1}{2}$ kilometres from the quay where the *Città* lay ; gorgeously soft sleeping-bags of fur were carried up on strong shoulders. There were heaps of furs, and pemmican, that indispensable article of food for polar men, was stowed away in the airship together with slabs of chocolate, boxes of biscuits, fruit, etc. Every conceivable thing—and a little bit more—seemed to be required for the trip.

Nobile himself was very active in the hangar, issuing orders and giving messages, pointing and gesticulating. I had a short conversation with him in the forenoon, but he knew very little about anything—everything depended on weather conditions, on Tromsö, on Malmgren. He did

not even know whether they would be eighteen or sixteen men on board. " Does the General expect to find new land between Spitsbergen and Francis Joseph's Land ? " I asked him. " I don't know," he replied ; " we shall see." Aboard the *Città* there was a triumvirate, with Nobile as chief-in-command and the meteorologist Malmgren as adviser. There were only three people who knew beforehand the dispositions and plans.

A couple of days before start number two, for Nicholas II Land, it began to snow, not just ordinarily, but wet and heavy snow that came straight down and settled on the airship. There is no roof to the hangar, and therefore nothing to prevent the snow from settling where it listeth. It was an exciting night—a night of horror, the Italians said, and they ought to know. Sailors, meteorologists, alpine troops, Norwegian emergency gangs, everybody lent a hand to free the airship from its burden of ten tons of snow. Three thousand litres of petrol were run off, everything movable was taken out, and gas was fed to the craft to increase its lifting power. It was a regular job of snow-shovelling, with relief-men balancing themselves on the planks along the walls of the hangar, ninety feet up, using their brooms with a will, while the envelope quivered under the weight of the snow and the brooming. To make matters still worse a fierce storm arose, and it was feared that the ninety-feet-high tarpaulin shutters would blow in and flatten the tail or the nose of the airship. The Italians had very real difficulties to overcome.

But other days dawned after these. The midnight sun shone once more over the storm-riven mining camp and relieved the anxiety felt for the fate of the airship. The sky was an infinitely remote and transparent vault, everything seemed near and at the same time so far away, and we blinked at the sun and at the eternal whiteness of the ground about us, surrounded by the gimlet-points of the mountains,

silent witnesses of the drama about to be played on the snow-field stage at the foot of Zeppelin Mountain. How oppressive was all this whiteness, this infinite white desert, the snow-covered ice of the fjord, the white field of snow at the foot of the mountain, the white peaks—white, always white, and nothing whereon a searching eye might find a resting-place.

But now the real start was to be made. It was as if an invigorating breeze had toned up the men ; they understood that something was to happen soon. The General went about in the hangar all through the night, supervised this thing and that, took a glass of chianti with his men and munched a biscuit, while the crew between whiles sang Fascist songs and national anthems. Night waned and morning came, but no start. Noon came. The men were dead tired, and dropped off for a nap where they happened to be—on a tarpaulin, on top of the gas-cylinders, on a box, or on their coats spread out on the snow. The next moment they might be wanted—though drunk with sleepiness and ready to drop, up they must go !

One of the chiefs of the technical crew was called Rosetti. He was a unique person, an indefatigable worker, who was looked upon by everybody with the deepest respect. When first the airship came to New Aalesund he stood on the mooring-mast for seven hours at a stretch, thinly clad, without food or drink, ordering and arranging the anchoring of it. On the night before the start for Nicholas II Land, I remember, he lay down for a moment. Immediately someone called " Rosetti—Rosetti ! " and like a rocket he was up again. (He was also in New Aalesund in 1926, when Amundsen flew to Alaska.) With a smile he now rose from his tarpaulin in the snow as he said : " King's Bay '26—good—very good. King's Bay '28 no good—no eat—no sleep—work, only work. King's Bay '26 eat, drink, work—*Norge* ready, quick ready, few days. King's

Bay '28 *Italia* never ready—never ready." This terrific worker had learnt a little Norwegian, and he was dead set on marrying a Norwegian girl on the spot—at any rate he proposed, and I think it was silly of the lady to say no.

There was to be a start, but if a motor enters into one's calculations it is no use speaking of a departure at such and such a time. When all is said a motor is no more than a motor, and such creatures seem to be highly gifted with contrariness. The new stern motor was no exception to the rule ; it was as awkward as possible, and the chief engineer, a magnificent creature called Ceccioni, had much trouble in starting it up. But he was a wizard with motors, and finally he got it going.

At five minutes past one the *Italia* was at last hauled out of the hangar by a couple of hundred Italians. The sky was azure, and the baking sunshine soon melted what little snow remained on the envelope. Guided by four hundred strong arms, the airship glided sideways down on to the plateau by Amundsen's mooring-mast. The Pope's representative, Padre Gian Franceschi—who, it was originally intended, should have accompanied the airship on this tour in order to drop the Pope's cross at the Pole—said the explorer's prayer. All heads were bared ; the melodious voice of the Padre imparted a peculiar tone to this unusual scene, to this ceremony of departure under the vault of heaven, in nature's own cathedral, the highest-domed in the world. A bottle of Italian spumante was broken against the stem of the pilot's gondola. There was a general hand-shaking, and Nobile posed for a couple of film photographers, embraced his brother the professor, and his friends. The order to let her go was given, and the ropes slid through the four hundred hands, while the motors droned their monotonous song. Under ear-splitting *ala*-shouts from deep Italian voices, the airship rose vertically into the air. Meanwhile a German film-man, entirely

unobserved, was photographing the departure from the coal-tip. (This man was the representative of a company which had been offered the sole rights of filming the start for one million liras !) Just for luck the crew gave a cheer for every motor that droned. At an altitude of three hundred feet the *Italia* glided away towards the blueish King's Glacier where King's Bay terminates. As it passed above the bay the airship was trimmed and its altitude increased, and out beyond pointed Cape Mitra it made for the North.

The inhabitants of the mining camps had seen so many polar flights that they had become somewhat *blasé*. They were so used to them by now that not many were present at this departure. If some of the miners chanced to come along the narrow road or along the track in the deep snow when the airship was just setting out, they would remark, " Out flying again, is he ? " They scarcely bothered to turn their heads when the airship hummed its way above the roofs of their houses.

Like a small speck, the *Italia* at last disappeared on the horizon before the eyes of those whose business it was to follow its progress. There was a long period of waiting in front of us before the craft was to return. We tried to kill time with visits on board the *Città*, where the journalists were given the official statements regarding the flight.

A special story attaches to these statements. They were available for all pressmen at New Aalesund, and therefore they did not possess the same news value as the personal copy one secured for oneself by dint of a little ingeniousness. On board the *Città* were the official reports which must be regarded as complete—it was like fetching the " official " statements after Friday's Cabinet meetings at home in Oslo. Somewhat more valuable and exciting were the bits of news regarding the airship which were communicated to the ships' officers and to the Italian

newspapers ; they contained at least three times as much information. Once, by mistake, the chief of the *Città*, Commandant Romagna Manoya, nearly gave me this " wrong " report. We were standing chatting, and, as he handed me the " wrong " one he said, " Here is the latest report of the day." It was the longest of the two reports lying there, and I was hoping in my journalistic heart that the Commandant would not notice his mistake, but in the twinkling of an eye he had the effrontery to discover that he was on the point of giving me some " first class " news ! As if struck by lightning, he exclaimed, " No, that is the wrong one. This is the one for *you*."

From dry and scanty facts one had to evolve a bit more—use one's imagination, without allowing it to run amok. Mostly it was padding about wind and weather, about chances and possibilities. According to the reports we received everything was going smoothly, all was sunshine and fair weather. The difficulties and unpleasantnesses were reserved for the officers on board the *Città*, and for the Press of Italy. It even happened on one occasion that the *Italia* sent out false statements ; at any rate, we were given on board the *Città* the official information that the *Italia* was flying over Nicholas II Land on the evening of May 16th—even to the detail that it was flying over that land from seven o'clock to ten o'clock. So the goal had evidently been reached. We were wondering whether some of the flyers had landed, and whether they would find new land. A little excitement crept into the otherwise dry reports. But we soon found that the news was premature, and that the *Italia*, because of the fog, had not even seen Nicholas II Land. The news that the goal had been reached travelled, as all good news should, all over the world, but a few days later we had to deny the whole story. Where the fault lay was never discovered. American papers telegraphed and asked their correspondents in New Aalesund whether it

was really true that the airship purposely sent out false reports. (The flight to Nicholas II Land was to have been the most important of them all ; the most significant geographically ; in fact, this flight was to have justified the whole expedition.)

Many a trip we made on board the *Città* during those days, and during the nights as well. Our eternal rivalry kept us awake—no-one must be allowed to get one syllable more than another. During the flight there were glorious opportunities to study Italian psychology. Be it officers or men, it was obvious from their faces whether things were going well or not. They became, so to say, our barometer, registering fair conditions or foul, as the case might be. Naturally the Italians were keener than anyone else to hear the news. They bolted the reports from the airship, and there were plenty of them. During the flight the *Italia's* wireless operators, the now famous Biagi and Pedretti, were up to their ears receiving weather reports from the Geophysical Institute in Tromsö and other messages of interest, and also, and that not least, with sending Nobile's Press news. The General is a capable journalist, and it was intimated to us by persons who ought to know that he got three million liras for his material. One of the journalists of the expedition, Dr. Tomaselli, said on one occasion that Nobile was the pressmen's worst rival—it was almost impossible to get anything out of him, for he wanted the stuff himself for his articles and his big book.

Some idea of the work of the wireless men during the sixty-eight hours long flight may be gathered from an examination of the messages. When the airship was on its eastern course, passing Francis Joseph's Land, the General sent the following wireless message to Mussolini :

" My promise to guide the *Italia* across unexplored polar territories is now being fulfilled. I send your

Excellency respectful greetings from myself and my whole crew. We are now passing the north-eastern point of Francis Joseph's Land, our course being due north. The ocean is ice-free here. Perfect visibility increases my hope of landing on Nicholas II Land, probably in the course of the day."

Mussolini was always informed first about everything that happened.

With the aid of the wireless we will now follow the airship on its way eastward and back again to New Aalesund. The next telegram was headed : " *Italia* wireless, May 16th, 8.15 in the morning." It ran :

" I am flying low over Teplitz Bay, where the Duke of the Abruzzi's ship, the *Stella Polaris*, wintered. I dropped a Marcus symbol on the ice in memory of Francesco Querini, the Duke's heroic second-in-command of twenty years ago."

Every hour the *Italia* was in wireless communication with the *Città*. The same day, at 11.30 a.m., the airship reported :

" Our position is now 82° 19′ north and 70° 40′ east. We are flying above frozen sea. The range of visibility is about 75 kilometres, and we look across regions which have not previously been explored. Our course is set for the most northerly point of Nicholas II Land. All well on board."

About an hour later—to be exact, at 12.46—the wireless reported :

" Our position now is 82° north and 73° 45′ east. Strong wind from north has delayed our flight. Our speed is reduced to 45 kilometres per hour. It is cloudy,

but visibility continues good. Our progress is satisfactory and all is well on board."

" *Italia* wireless, May 16th, 7.15 p.m.

" The *Italia's* position now is approximately 80° north and 82° east. We have passed a large area of ice-free water of rectangular form. At its broadest it measures at least five kilometres. We are again approaching pack-ice. Visibility is fairly good and the sky is cloudy. The north wind continues to hamper our progress and renders the navigation of the ship difficult. All is well."

" *Italia* wireless, May 17th, 0.15 a.m.

" We have decided after thirty-six hours flight without seeing land to return via Novaya Zemlya. The meteorological conditions also recommend the course across Novaya Zemlya.

" This island has just come in sight on our left. The temperature during the entire voyage has varied between 14 and 15 degrees (centigrade) of frost. The wireless has functioned excellently the whole time. Not for a single moment have we felt severed from the rest of the world. The *Città di Milano's* weather reports have been of the greatest service. Our course has been straight towards Nicholas II Land the whole time. Practically without interruption visibility has been excellent. The head wind from the north, which hampered us much, may have been a blessing after all, as it has prevented the formation of the thick fog which is a still worse enemy to navigation in polar regions than in other places, and it is often accompanied by lightning and thunder."

" *Italia* wireless, May 17th, 7.30 a.m.

" Strong north wind, and we are flying above banks of fog. Our position is now above Novaya Zemlya."

"At 9.20 a.m. our position was 76° 18′ north, 59° 55′ east. We are making for Abel Island, still across frozen sea. The sky is clear and we have 17 degrees of frost. At 10.30 a.m. approximately 140 kilometres east-south-east of Cape Leigh Smith, surrounded by fog and snow. We nevertheless proceed on a normal course for the North Cape of Spitsbergen.

"The wireless has been wonderful. The *Città di Milano* has been in incessant communication with the *Italia*, using a wave-length of 2,400 metres, whilst the *Italia* has used a wave-length of 900 metres. Outside the 1,000 metre radius short wave-lengths were employed by both sides with absolute success. I tried last night to send a message direct to Rome, and almost succeeded, but unfortunately the connection was not established, as a European station interfered at that moment."

Although the goal had not been reached, the human barometer aboard the *Città* seemed to indicate fair weather. This reading of the barometer lasted until the evening of the 17th of May, when there was abundant evidence that something was toward. The extremely thick fog and a strong north wind were contributory causes for Malmgren's advice to Nobile that they ought to turn back. This was done, and the course was set for Novaya Zemlya.

Weather conditions near Nicholas II Land, the "promised land," had become so bad as to make observations impossible. On board the *Città* the position was discussed from every angle. The wind drove the airship on a southerly course, and weather conditions were anything but good. Would the *Italia* succeed in getting back to its hangar? Would the ship have to go to Vadsö, to the mooring-mast there? Would the wind increase and drive the airship still further south? Feverish activity reigned on board the *Città*. As usual, it was the chief wireless operator,

Captain Baccarani, who had the hardest job. He was now, as on so many previous occasions, the centre of the ship, the pivot round which everything revolved. The maps were constantly referred to, possibilities and chances were discussed, and courses and probable deflections calculated. The wireless cabin was besieged by officers armed with compasses, and by groups of men who talked with both hands and mouths. The airship was constantly demanding bearings during the afternoon of the 17th, and all through the evening and the night. Vadsö held itself in readiness for the reception of the visitor from the air.

It is no exaggeration to state that considerable anxiety for the fate of the airship was felt on board the *Città* on that day. If the north-west wind freshened still more, it was feared that the store of petrol might give out. I plainly remember a group of men on the decks of the *Città* that evening, among them being the Commandant Manoya and the wireless chief, Baccarani, passionately discussing the fate of the airship. The wireless chief was full of apprehension, the Commandant preferred to take an optimistic view of the situation, and, when he noticed that " outsiders " were near enough to hear what was being said, he dismissed Baccarani with a wave of the hand, saying, " *Va bene, va bene.*"

At some period during the night between the 17th and 18th of May, the airship did not know its position ; it asked insistently for bearings, and the compasses made energetic movements across the draughts in the wireless cabin aboard. At length they succeeded in defining the position of the airship, though for a long time it seemed doubtful whether it would succeed in getting back to its point of departure. But the men of the *Italia* were fortunate, and finally they reached Abel Island on the eastern coast of North-East Land. From there the airship set a course for Cape Leigh Smith. But what would be the better course

now, along the coast or across the land? Snow had begun to fall, rendering navigation difficult, and fog set in. At a great altitude they set their course above the land, photographing the same spots where the German, Mittelholzer, had taken such excellent pictures.

On the morning of the 18th there was a great commotion in the mining camp. Nobile had reported by wireless that he would be in New Aalesund about eight o'clock. Once more, as so often before, it was a case of waiting. One had, so to say, to soak oneself in patience. At 9.15 a.m. the *Italia* came towards the mining camp across King's Bay at an altitude of 8,700 feet. At this great distance it was a mere speck, but the motors announced their arrival in a powerful and persistent drone. And what a day! Not a whiff of wind, and the most wonderful sunshine baked one's face and made one's eyes smart. From the *Città* men in long heavy cloaks poured out, fluttering their way across the snow-field. The Italian barometer now indicated fairer than fair. They were burning with impatience to seize the ropes, to pull the airship in and the flyers out. The *Italia* had been relieved of many tons of petrol and oil and had difficulty in getting down. It made circle after circle, far out above Quade Hook towards Foreland Sound, back again across the camp towards King's Glacier, then once more across the camp towards the landing-place in front of the hangar. From an altitude of a good 300 feet the rope was flung out—the great coil at its end looking like a rolled plug of tobacco, getting smaller and smaller, until it hit the ground with a thud. A hundred hands seized the rope, hung on to it, and slowly but surely the airship sank towards the ground. The other ropes, those on the sides, were laid hold of, and in the course of a quarter of an hour the ship itself was held. *Ala*-shouts greeted the smiling flyers. In slow march the *Italia* was led into the hangar. There it was put to rest, after its strenuous flight, and one

by one the crew left the pilot's gondola. Nobile came first, tired and worn, but smiling. As usual he was in the uniform of a General. The dog Titina—surely the worst gadabout in the world—followed at her master's heels, trembling and with anxious eyes. After the General had posed on the snow, where the cameras clicked incessantly, he was triumphantly escorted on board the *Città*.

Congratulations poured into the pilot's cabin, and the crew had enough to do with reading the telegrams and clearing the ship after its nearly three-days' flight. Then appeared the close-built, comfortable little Finn Malmgren, almost rotund in his flying-suit. From every quarter they shouted their " Welcome " to him, and Malmgren smiled his thanks. " It is very good to feel firm ground under one's feet again," was his first remark. We flocked round him.

" What has the trip been like ? "

" Very pleasant and eventful."

" What did really happen on the trip ? "

" Ah, if you only knew ! " was the good-natured reply.

" But," he continued, " if you don't ask me, then we haven't been over Nicholas II Land."

" And didn't you see the land, either ? "

" I am not so sure about that."

" Was there fog below you ? "

" Don't know definitely."

" But wasn't there sun below you when you were in the vicinity of the land ? "

" Well, the sun is generally up above."

Malmgren was a born diplomat, and one was never quite sure what he meant when he was talking, for there was always a humorous glint in his eyes. Besides, he was bound by his contract to keep mum. We brought our friend inside, relieved him of his flying-kit, provided him with a wash in an enamel bowl, and gave him a glass of whisky to cleanse his throat after his sixty-eight hours of abstinence.

AFTER THE FLIGHT TO NICHOLAS II LAND

Apparently everything had frozen on board. If one wanted a sip of tea one had to break it up—in other words, eat it instead of drinking it ! It was forbidden to carry chianti, the Italian national drink, on the flight, but nevertheless some of the crew had smuggled ten bottles on board. They didn't get much joy out of this, for the contents froze into a block of red ice ! The cigars they carried with them crumbled into dust. During the long flight the water in the cooling apparatus froze, and on one occasion they had to cool one of the motors with tea, which was luckily not yet frozen. One of the journalists tried to get Malmgren to talk :

" You threw down a flag on Francis Joseph's Land, didn't you ? "

" I don't know. I was asleep at the time."

" But we know you threw down a flag there," said the journalist.

" Then why are you asking me ? "

In the vicinity of Nicholas II Land a certain number of birds were discovered, and on the ice three or four ice-bears were seen. When one had nothing else to do one could only keep awake by steering, said Malmgren, and with a certain pride, which was entirely justified, he added, " The last part of the flight was exclusively by radio-meteorological navigation."

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Malmgren mentioned that the flight was " eventful." And this indeed proved to have been the case, for not only were they ignorant of their position, and doubtful as to how the flight would end, but on one occasion they were even in imminent peril of their lives. This event happened at Novaya Zemlya. They were flying at an altitude of approximately 1,800 feet when suddenly they heard the aerial, which was hanging down about 300 feet below the

airship, dragging along the ground, or perhaps more correctly, along a mountain-side. They were enveloped in fog, but through a rift ahead they caught a glimpse of a mountain peak. The nose of the airship was swiftly pointed heavenwards, and in the nick of time a collision, which would have smashed the ship and killed the crew on the spot, was avoided. To say that it was a tense moment is to put it mildly. On the next flight, however, the record in this regard was to be broken.

. . . . . .

Nobile's first protracted flight on his own responsibility in polar regions was at an end, and everyone concerned fully deserved the rest which they were now able to enjoy.

In the evening the General granted me an interview, which he had promised me before they went away. He was still in bed, not yet sufficiently rested after the strain of the flight. We had a lengthy conversation, while Titina made herself comfortable on my lap. From an aero-technical point of view, the General was quite satisfied with the results, and he spoke of his airship in the warmest possible terms. " Practically speaking, nothing can happen to it," he said. " Everything possible has been done to strengthen it. All dangers have been foreseen, and she is as strong as any airship can be." It was obvious that he was somewhat disappointed at not having found Nicholas II Land, and at not having been able to land his men there to carry out the scientific work about which he had been so keen, and which seemed to him to be of the greatest importance. Further, he wanted to forestall the Russians —to explore the land before they arrived. As is well known, the Russians have for a long time planned a thorough exploration of that land, but their plans have not been executed because they could not agree among themselves

as to whether flying machines, ordinary vessels as used in Arctic waters, or strong ice-breakers ought to be employed.

" It is possible," said the General finally, when Titina appeared to be getting a little impatient, " that we may make another flight eastward again when we have been to the North Pole." But in this he was doomed to disappointment.

It must be said, to Nobile's credit, that he fully understood the journalists and their work, and considered it of value to be on good terms with the newspapers. Himself a journalist, he was naturally the first person to admit the importance of the Fifth World Power. He therefore gave us pressmen an audience in his cabin on board the *Città* a couple of days before the start for the North Pole. Besides the General, there were five of us present. He spoke in English, and, though he regretted he did not speak it as well as might be, he hoped we should be able to understand him. By concentrating all our attention on him, as though we were boys sitting on a form at school before a very strict and severe teacher, we did succeed in grasping his meaning. And indeed we soon discovered we were not so very far removed from the school atmosphere. In short, we were " carpeted." I myself was taken to task because, before the departure for Nicholas II Land, I had informed my paper that Nobile had drunk a toast with his people in a glass of chianti in the hangar. " I have never drunk wine," said the General. " I am awfully sorry," I had to reply, " but with my own eyes I saw the General drink it." Well, this was, after all, no great matter, and after my remark he said nothing further about it. Then came the next man's turn. He was a writer of stories from the Polar Sea, by name Lars Hansen, and he was trying his hand as a journalist. " *You*," said Nobile, pointing demonstratively at the culprit, " have telegraphed to American newspapers an interview with me. I am reported to have

said all sorts of things. Now, I have never spoken to you, so how do you explain that? You have likewise said that we dropped a flag on Novaya Zemlya—whereas it was on Francis Joseph's Land."

The culprit: "I can imagine how the story about the interview arose. I send my stuff to Holland and France, and from there it is transmitted to America, and when it gets there, well, you know as well as I do, that they are not above making a 'big story' out of it." The culprit's hands were waved abroad as though describing an infinite arc spanning the universe. "But," he continued, "if we should happen to write something which is not exactly according to your wishes, then, being the great man you are, don't you care a damn nickel about it!" And therewith, quite jovially, the culprit gave the General's thigh a good hearty slap with his flat hand. Even the General had to smile at this abounding joviality, and he asked us to apply to the Commandant of the ship or to one of the Italian journalists if there was anything we wished to know or about which we were not perfectly clear. But if we talked directly with the General, sent our stuff in the form of an interview, or wrote "the General says," he demanded that the MS. should be shown to him.

When our "carpeting" was at an end the General handed us over to one of the Italian journalists, who began to tell us about the now two-days old flight to Nicholas II Land—which had already been published in all the world's newspapers, and which had no longer any news value whatsoever. We asked him to let us have "hot" news, and were given a few scraps about the coming flight to the North Pole—the probable procedure, how they meant to land, and a few other details.

. . . . . .

The next start was to take place as soon as possible. They were waiting for the necessary high pressure, and

the ordinary preparations naturally took some time. At home in Norway it was full spring, but here in New Aalesund, the town of polar flights. . . . What a thing to call spring ! We were supposed to be in the last days of May, and the sun did try as well as it could to bring spring. It made desperate attempts to loosen the six-feet-long icicles above the door of my temporary home—a small, light hut, convenient and simple. Between the houses we walked through snow-drifts twelve feet high, and on the roof of my hut the snow was still lying in thick borders. The sun made the snow somewhat crisp, but when there was a slight fall in temperature it was covered with a fine crust, which made the skis slip easily along. Spring, indeed ! Is there anyone in the realm of snow and ice who is not dreaming about spring ? When they saw the latest newspapers (which had been published towards the end of April), with their many indications of spring, the miners here would say, " That's the kind of stuff the papers ought not to write. It makes us ill." Sunshine we have, sunshine burning night and day—except when interrupted by snow, falling layer by layer on camp and mountain, putting an end to all visibility. The only thing which reminds one of spring is the happy chirping of the snow-bunting as it hops about on the snow-drifts, and the hoarse cries of the gulls on the midden. The arrival of a solitary sloop from Tromsö with a lone camera-man on board we also take as a sign of spring. The only thing that breaks the monotony of the landscape is the black, knobbly ice from the glacier, which lies scattered abroad on the infinite plain of the fjord-ice, and the bluish-green wedge of open water where the miners have exploded the ice away with 1,500 kilos of dynamite. The fact that the " air routes " in Arctic regions are opened might also be accepted as a kind of message of spring, I suppose. The crowd that throngs the mining camp is a motley one. There are all sorts of Italian military uniforms

—common soldiers in grey, picturesque Alpini, naval officers in brilliant uniforms with masses of decorations, and marines in fluttering cloaks.

The transport of the gas-cylinders remained an awkward problem. The tractor sank into the snow until it was almost submerged. So they tried to use a winch, but the winch toppled over, nearly killing a man who had fallen under the two-ton weight of that machine. Altogether, the method of work would not be classed as first-rate, for the Italians are unaccustomed to work in the snow. When it snowed the fact was accepted as a good joke—there is no harm in the weather occasionally justifying one in having a nap !

Hundreds of matters, great and small, had to be arranged before every start, so that usually it took from ten to twelve hours from the time fixed for the departure before they got under way. It would be useful to have a shop out here on the ice where this thing and that could be bought as required ! There was the same toil and fuss to get the airship ready, the same noise and running about as when the previous start was made. From a pressman's point of view it was almost becoming a bore.

The departure for the North Pole was originally intended to take place during the evening of the 22nd of May, but it did not materialise until many hours later. The previous evening Nobile called the pressmen together to inform them that *he himself* would descend on the Pole first, after which two other men, probably Malmgren and Professor Pontremoli, would be landed. The General also took great pains to inform us of the intention to drop the Italian flag, the Pope's cross, the flag of the town of Milan, a five-pound note that had been given him by an English lady, and other souvenirs on the Pole.

Again there was great activity in the hangar, men rushing around, busy as bees. The crew of the airship moved

about as if on cats' feet, for it was forbidden to use boots with iron heel-tips—they might have struck sparks in the airship and caused an explosion. The flyers, therefore, wore *finsko* (the mocassins of the Arctic), though there was an additional reason, of course—the cold.

The hours preceding the start are imprinted clearly on my mind. Here comes the large and solid pilot of the *Italia*, Captain Mariano, stable and solid as a mountain, and there the equally steady and prudent chief motor engineer, Ceccioni—a magnificent figure of a man. And there is Nobile himself, active and busy. He goes up to Ceccioni, saying that he really must put an end to the testing of the new stern motor, for now they must get away. Ceccioni waves his chief away and continues, rapt in his work, listening as the violinist listens to the tones of his Strad, and not until he has achieved the exact note, found the right timbre in the voice of the motor, does he finish his task. Nobile moves to and fro, inspecting everything. He picks up a large packet of chocolate, extracts a couple of slabs, weighs them in his hand, and throws some of them into the pilot's gondola. In the same manner he weighs some life-belts in his hands, and decides to leave half of them behind. The flight to the Pole is calculated to occupy thirty-five hours, and naturally it is not necessary to cart all the world along for a little trip like that.

The firmly built figure of Finn Malmgren is seen walking to and fro in the hangar with Mariano. They are discussing weather conditions, and they are anything but happy to be setting off now. For all is not as it should be with regard to the coveted high pressure. Malmgren would rather wait for better weather conditions, but go they must. Nobile is hurrying everybody, urging them to " get on with it " so that they can set out. They have no time to lose. When a great friend of Malmgren's, a friend who has had the opportunity to study weather conditions in

polar regions for decades, asks him, " Will you really start in weather like this ? " Malmgren answers, in his quiet, friendly way, " The weather is not of the best, but one hasn't the face to keep walking the decks of the *Città* when one has already donned one's flying-kit. I fear the nor'-wester and a lot of other trouble as well." Malmgren was only to take part in the two remaining flights—the one to the Pole, and the one to Greenland—and then he was going off home to get married. The scientist in him had got the upper hand. When, during the previous winter, he had been asked to accompany the *Italia* expedition, he had not felt very keen on the venture. He had been warned against joining. The individual who warned him was of the opinion that the expedition was not as well prepared as such an enterprise ought to be. There was, for instance, not one man from the polar seas among the crew. The only one among them who knew the polar ice, who had studied it for years, was Malmgren himself. It may be of interest to mention here that, when General Nobile visited Oslo last winter, he asked the University reader, Hr. Hoel, to procure him a capable man who, in case of a mishap, might assist the incapable polar flyers. A contract was drawn up with the Dano-Norwegian engineer Warming in Green Harbour, and the contract was sent to Rome, but it was never returned. It has been asserted that the reason was that in the highest quarters it was desired that the expedition should remain entirely Italian. It was reported that Nobile had asked Hr. Wisting to join the Italian expedition—he was to have 20,000 for the job, in addition to a monthly wage. When Wisting received the offer he is reported to have said to his friends, " What do you think the Captain (Amundsen) would say to that ? " Also other members of the Norwegian crew of the *Norge* were asked to join.

Once when I was talking about the expedition, about

BEFORE THE START TO THE NORTH POLE

its justification and its chances, Malmgren said, " I shall feel happy on the day when it is all over." Was this a kind of premonition ? He often talked about the bad weather at the end of May and in the beginning of June, about the fog which was the worst enemy of all flyers, for it was rather late for such a venture. He did indeed rely on the airship —I have even heard him speak in a very complimentary manner about it, and about Nobile as its designer. He seemed particularly impressed with the flight across Europe, on which occasion they flew through thunder and lightning, and the airship stood this severe trial extremely well. But he gave one the impression that, being amongst Italians only, he did not feel entirely at home— one of the reasons being that they did not to a sufficient degree listen to and follow his advice. There was an instance of this before they left for the Pole.

Here we were, waiting and waiting for the start, and Malmgren came sauntering along, giving us, as usual, a few words in passing. Even in the midst of his most important work, he was always ready for a cheerful chat, and he always had a kind word for everybody. There was a background of humour to all he said. Once I asked him, " Do you believe there is unknown land in the vicinity of the Pole ? " His reply was, " Now, one person after another has declared there is no land there, but it somehow doesn't seem to help you."

Here comes the dapper Captain Zappi, and here that man of the world, the polished Professor Pontremoli, and also the dark little journalist Dr. Ugo Lago. So he had succeeded in joining the expedition, then. How well I remembered the ardent little pressman in an incident in one of the cabins of the *Città*. It was during the flight to Nicholas II Land. Dr. Cesco Tomaselli, the journalist, was included in the crew on that voyage, and Lago was of the opinion that he himself ought to have gone. He was

giving quite a lecture to some of us, illustrating it with many gestures. Why should he not be included? Wasn't he on the staff of Mussolini's own paper, the *Popolo d'Italia*, and wasn't the Dictator himself keen on this flight? The man spoke quite convincingly, and so in the end he was included. Later on, after the disaster, when I asked Tomaselli if he wasn't glad to have remained behind (the original intention being that he also should have joined in the flight to the North Pole), he shrugged his shoulders and said, " Well, it is the polar flight they make a fuss of, after all." The rotund Czech meteorologist, Dr. Behounek, was happy to be allowed to join. He worried Roald Amundsen a great deal in 1926, but at that time he was not accepted. On this occasion, however, he was allowed to take the place of Padre Gian Franceschi. The Padre himself, the Pope's representative, who was to have dropped the six-feet cross on the very Pole itself, was watching the movements in the hangar, stoically calm and with dignified mien—a little disappointed, maybe, because he was not allowed to be of the party.

Time moved with a snail's pace for those who waited. Those of the crew who had nothing particular to do spent their time in practising the noble art of ski-ing. They crawled up the coal-tips near Amundsen's hangar and slid away. But, unaccustomed as they were to this strange apparatus, they all came to grief. The Alpini knew their work, and they were able to show their countrymen how to use the skis. Nobile himself made a few slight attempts on skis outside the hangar. One man fastened the skis to the General's feet, another handed him the staffs, and a third the mittens. When he really did make an earnest attempt he was surrounded by a staff of three men to assist him, if required—and indeed they were very much required!

On the stern of the airship a man was occupied with patching a rent in the envelope, which had somehow

split—probably due to the severe handling to which it had been subjected on the occasion when the snow settled on it. A large patch was put on, and the man prodded and banged the envelope until it quivered, so as to make sure that the repair was well done. . . . It is not improbable that this rent was the cause of the disaster two days later. Behind the pilot's cabin the envelope was also patched up immediately before the departure.

The time for leaving again approached.

" Where are my thermoses, my scientific thermoses ? " said Malmgren. " They have forgotten those, though they certainly didn't forget to bring the syphons of soda-water."

There were a thousand things to remember. Rosetti had his own affairs to mind—were the sandbags in order ? Ceccioni was nursing his beloved motors as though they were babies.

The Pope's cross, blessed by the Holy Father himself, was brought from the *Città* into the hangar and placed in the pilot's cabin. So apparently they had decided not to follow Madame Nobile's advice and postpone the dropping of the cross until the last flight, the one to Greenland. This was to have brought them luck. Many of them were already convinced that this flight to the North Pole could not have a happy ending because Madame's good advice was not being followed. Inside the hangar, below the stern of the airship, the Padre and the crew lined up. The Padre read the explorer's prayer, blessed the cross and all the crew. With great ceremony and reverence the cross was then carried to the pilot's cabin.

. . . . . .

Now we arrive at the more worldly part of the programme of departure. There is the popping of a couple of champagne corks, and the toast for a happy journey is drunk. The General makes a sign to Lars Hansen—the man

of the faked interview in the American newspapers—to approach, and asks, " Won't you drink a toast with me ? " " Rather ! " replies the grizzled author. The Italian camera-men are in position, ready to immortalise the great occasion. The General stands next to the author. They both have a glass of champagne, as have the rest of the men who are lined up. The camera-men are busily seeking to focus the scene, centring on the spot where the General and our author are standing with their glasses raised for the toast. But at the very moment when the cameras are ready to snap him the General runs away to the back of the hangar, where he stands laughing, away from all the rest. Everyone laughs. The author does not immediately grasp the situation, but soon it dawns on him that it is all a prearranged hoax, and demonstratively he empties the contents of his glass into the snow, and walks away. As he is leaving, the General calls after him, " You won't find it necessary to telegraph to the whole world that we have drunk champagne." This scene caused much comment in New Aalesund. . . . I may add that an official Italian journalist of the expedition telegraphed all over the world that they did drink champagne.

Time passes, and it is now four o'clock in the morning of the 23rd of May. The airship is at last leaving in real earnest. The same southern hands which have handled them so often before seize hold of the ropes and bring the unresisting ship out into the open. The usual good wishes are exchanged, the members of the crew kiss their friends, Nobile poses before the camera as usual. The engine-room telegraph clanks its order to start, the first motor commences its drone, the second follows suit, as does finally the third. The signal is given to let go the ropes, and the two hundred Italians surrender the airship and its crew of sixteen men to their fate and to the whims of the weather gods.

GENERAL NOBILE BEFORE THE START ON THE 23RD MAY

The *Italia* sets out on its last flight at 4.40 a.m. There is a note of spring keenness in the drone of the motors. Mariano puts a spurt on above King's Bay, pleased to show what his ship can do. A few other Norwegians and myself are observing the mighty bird as it proudly glides away. Suddenly the local doctor says, " Tell me, do you think we shall ever see the *Italia* and the flyers again ? I somehow have a feeling that we have seen them for the last time." We did not then attach much importance to his words. We had become so accustomed to seeing the airship going to and fro like a steamer on a regular route, that we never dreamed for an instant that it would all end in a terrible catastrophe.

When they saw the *Italia*, that mighty bird, hover above them, the flock of gulls on the midden near the camp scattered, shrieking like souls possessed. They obviously did not like the prospect of such competition !

We, whose business it was to be present at the start and as far as possible follow developments, remained there for half an hour or so, peering after the airship as it kept dipping before the nor'-wester off Cape Mitra. At last it disappeared as a foggy blot north-westwards.

The weather was not favourable—on the day of the start the barometer rose more rapidly than it had ever done before during the eleven years in which men had lived and worked in New Aalesund. We had no suspicion then that we had looked at the airship for the last time.

CHAPTER III

Which deals with the fifteen terrible days of waiting ; with the hunter Kremer's adventure with four Alpini amidst drift-ice in a nineteen-foot boat ; with the happy wireless message from the polar ice ; and with journalism and a Press censorship 80° north.

From the very beginning an evil fate seems to have dogged this flight. The *Italia* had barely passed Amsterdam Island when it encountered a strong wind from the north-east. Nobile himself stated, in an official report drawn up on board the *Città di Milano*, that " if I had not so firmly made up my mind to plant the Italian flag on the North Pole on May 24th—the anniversary of Italy's entrance into the world war—the whole disaster might have been averted." Such a wish, a whim, was thus to cost many men their lives and set the whole world astir.

Their course was set for Greenland's coast, and from there for that coveted spot, the Pole. At eight o'clock in the evening on the day of the start a wireless message was received to the effect that all was well on board, but no position was indicated. When I paid a call on board the *Città* later on in the evening, I was told that the message from the *Italia* was sent in cipher, and that, as no one on board had the key, it had to be relayed to Rome to be deciphered. All they understood of the contents was " All well." It seemed strange to me that they could not decipher the rest. Could the explanation be that the telegram mentioned troubles and difficulties ? Or was it perhaps the great news that they were approaching the Pole—news which must first be communicated to Mussolini before anyone else was allowed to know ? Earlier in the evening

the *Italia* had reckoned on being at the Pole about midnight, so apparently we were in for another night-watch. There was a raw wind that night. Some of us journalists tramped the *Città's* deck, waiting for the news which now interested us above everything else : the landing on the Pole. The General's brother, Professor Nobile, and Padre Gian Franceschi were also promenading the deck, occasionally putting their heads, through the door or through the portholes, into the wireless cabin.

It was now midnight, and at any moment a message from the *Italia* might be expected, giving us the latest news from the Pole. The Commandant of the *Città* had been roused, and he came hurrying along in his slippers and smoking-jacket. He slipped into the wireless cabin—the *Italia* was now approaching " the crown of the world." A second later Manoya came rushing out, shouting to us pressmen, " Your station is too active ! " (The wireless station on shore was engaged in sending Press telegrams.) " In the midst of an important telegram we were interrupted." We learned later that the operators of the *Città* were at that moment receiving the message about the flag and the Pope's cross being dropped on the Pole.

That " special " news from the Pole seemed to take a long time, and probably we would not get it through until towards three o'clock in the morning, which was pretty late for our papers. At last, blue with cold after having waited for three hours in the raw air of night, we decided to go home again. Professor Nobile then came up to us and said : " I think you ought to wait ; there may be some news presently." About three o'clock, Nobile's deputy, the journalist Tomaselli, came to tell us with a beaming face that the *Italia* had crossed the Pole at twenty minutes after midnight, that the Italian flag had been dropped then, the Pope's cross ten minutes later, and the flag of the town of Milan five minutes after that. This accomplished, they had

immediately started on the return journey. At 1.30 the General sent a greeting to his wife, and—what was still more staggering—at 2.10 the General was already in possession of the reply from Rome ! And he might even have had the reply twenty minutes earlier if the *Italia* had not been so busy receiving weather reports. To Mussolini the General sent the following message : " At 1.20 to-day the flag of Italy again flies above the ice at the Pole. General Nobile." The telegram to the Italian King ran : " From the North Pole the crew of the *Italia* send their respectful greetings. General Nobile." And finally was wirelessed to the Pope : " At 1.30 to-day we lowered with deep emotion the cross which was entrusted to me and my comrades. We wish to express our gratitude for being entrusted with this exalted mission, and once more beg to express to Your Holiness our deepest respect. General Nobile."

We interviewed the journalist on board the *Città*, enquiring whether the General or any of his men had landed at the Pole. The General had not mentioned that point, so we assumed that it was certain he had not done so. The flow of news for us was very meagre that night, but we created many imaginary sources of comfort for ourselves—for instance, that there might be more news to-morrow. But it was generally " to-morrow " so far as the *Città* was concerned. Later on we heard that when the airship reached the Pole the fog reigned supreme, they could not get a glimpse of the sky, and Zappi and Mariano had to take observations without astronomical aid. The airship descended to an altitude of 450 feet, where a clear view of the ice itself was obtained. While the *Italia* circled round the point of the Pole, Nobile ordered the Fascist hymn to be played on the gramophone, and all the Italians raised their right hands in the Fascist salute. Afterwards the gramophone played " Beautiful Italy, with all my heart."

It had now been confirmed that not one of the *Italia's* men landed at the Pole, and no further reference was made to the matter. On the day after the great achievement, work went with a merry swing. There were grins on the swarthy southern faces, and their eyes were alight. All the Italians were full of the one subject : the *Italia* reached the Pole last night—the cross was dropped. An almost black marine was singing the Turret Song from *Tosca*, and when he saw me approaching he greeted me heartily, saying : " Nobile norte polo, croce, croce, norte polo ! " He nodded at every word, emphasising and illustrating them with vivid gestures. For the Italians spring had now really arrived. The great event of the night made them strong for further effort. The gas cylinders seemed to roll on land at a quicker pace, and even the tractor was singing a merrier song than was its wont.

Some of the hunters of the islands had returned to " civilisation " after long and lonely nights and days spent in darkness and winter storms. The catch had been not at all bad, and now they were trading in the roomy saloon of the *Città*. Skins of white fox, blue fox, and ice bear were flung across tables and couches, and the ship's officers were adorning themselves with the beautiful furs, swaggering around and admiring themselves in the mirrors. The hunters did a roaring trade that day.

On Thursday evening, May 24th, the *Italia* was expected back, and preparations began to be made for seizing it when it appeared above the mining camp.

Whilst we waited and waited, the Italians were already preparing for the next venture. The *Italia* wouldn't be long now—of course it wouldn't ! But the atmosphere somehow did not seem quite as happy as before. The messages from the *Italia* were fewer and shorter, reporting that those on board had all their work cut out to navigate the airship, that ice was forming inside, and that pieces of ice were

falling down into the interior of the airship. Fortunately, the damage was comparatively easily repaired. Ice was forming also on the outside, and that was a more serious matter. The wind was gradually increasing, diminishing the speed by 50 kilometres—to just above half its usual speed. The day after they reached the North Pole the airship had to fly above the fog at an altitude of 3,000 feet. The motors were pressed to yield their utmost in order to reach New Aalesund before the petrol gave out. Until Saturday morning, the fourth day after the departure, the airship could remain in the air with its motors going, but it could not be denied that there was an element of danger—although nobody would dream of doubting, of course, even if it was a Friday. Ever since the airship had set out from the coast it had been enveloped in fog, and was uncertain as to its position. As on previous occasions, the *Città* was fully occupied with sending it bearings. Soon, however, even the wireless connection was to fail.

At 10.30 on Friday morning, May 25th, the wireless operator Biagi, on board the *Italia*, reported their position as being north of the small Moffen Island, due north of Wood Bay. The exact course they did not know. They were having a fairly strong wind from the south-west, and the stern motor was turned off to save petrol, which was running seriously low. The *Italia* would try to fly across North-East Land, but could not be expected back until some time during the evening at the earliest. Biagi said he would call again in about two hours' time. (But fate decreed that it was to be a fortnight before he was able to report to the *Città* and the rest of the world.) There was still a great belief that the airship would return to New Aalesund, and everything was made ready to receive it. There were the two hundred Italians, and extra help was hired from the mining camp. The strong wind necessitated

a landing at the mooring-mast, and every living soul had to lend a hand on such an occasion.

As the day gave way to night, and the night passed, the uncertainty increased, and on Saturday morning the suspense was at its height. It was Whitsun Eve, and about two o'clock in the afternoon was the extreme limit allowed for the return of the airship by the aid of its motors. On board the *Città* the commotion was great. In the wireless cabin they were searching for the *Italia*, calling and calling, but obtaining no reply. Then they waited for a while, hoping that the operator might be asleep after the severe strain of the last few days. He would be certain to call again. But no Biagi, no *Italia* called. In vain the *Città* was sending its signals out into the universe. The head-wind had been so strong during the last few days that the airship had been unable to make any progress, and it was even rumoured on board the *Città* that it had been partly driven back on its course. At eight o'clock in the morning Nobile sent a message asking insistently for directions to be wirelessed every hour, which betrayed his anxiety regarding the possible results of such weather.

Hour after hour slipped away, and still they were unable to get in touch with the *Italia*, while no message arrived. The time-limit for the return of the airship had been exceeded ; something must have happened, an accident must have overtaken the ship and its crew. But what could have happened ? The last wireless message from the *Italia* was sent at 10.30 on Friday morning, and since then Biagi had not given the slightest sign of life. Could it be that the aerial had become coated with ice? That was certainly one possibility. It seemed unbelievable that anything could have happened to the airship itself—Nobile himself had said that it was as strong as an airship could possibly be, that practically nothing could happen to it. We also called to mind what the pilot of the ship, Captain Mariano, said

NORWEGIAN COAL-MINES IN NEW AALESUND, KING'S BAY, AND THE "CITTÀ DI MILANO"

on one occasion : " To fly in the polar zone is like eating bread and butter. In Europe the natural conditions are considerably more difficult. Besides which, it is light night and day in polar regions."

But where was the *Italia* ? What could have happened to the airship and its crew of sixteen men ? Perhaps it was drifting before the wind—had swung round towards the west, to Francis Joseph's Land or Novaya Zemlya, or to Siberia. In the afternoon of Whitsun Eve, when I met Rosetti and looked at him questioningly, he said " Sibiria, Sibiria ! "

The fog had set in over the massed mountains of Spitsbergen, and we were wondering whether it had been impossible for them to make a landfall. This polar flight was started under conditions which were as unfavourable as possible ; for a whole week after the start on Wednesday, May 23rd, the flying conditions were bad, but after that we had fine weather for three days, which would have been sufficient for the flight. Also, later on there were periods of fine weather extending over several days.

On board the *Città* the atmosphere was now heavy and full of gloom. The bunkering of the boat was speeded up, and Norwegian helpers were again hired from the mines to lend a hand, so that they might quickly get away northward in search of the *Italia*.

The Geophysical Institute in Tromsö reported to the *Città* that on Friday morning a cyclone had suddenly swept towards the north-west coast of Spitsbergen. As the cyclone approached from the west, it must have driven the airship eastward at a great speed. Had the cyclone, and the ice and snow on the envelope, together pressed the airship down on to the ice ? Or perhaps smashed it and killed the crew ? Or had the *Italia*, in the thick fog, drifted over the land and collided with one of the high peaks in the north—for instance, that fellow of 15,100 feet high, Newton

Mountain, in New Friesland ? So many things might have happened. During the preceding winter, when Nobile called on Hr. Hoel, he asked him to mark off all the mountains in Spitsbergen, and their respective heights. He was much interested in this work, but, strangely enough, before the departure from New Aalesund he refused an offer from some hunters to mark off hunters' cabins and winter quarters in the north.

What had happened ? What could one do to help the unfortunate Italians—if, indeed, they were alive ? These questions were repeatedly asked. In the afternoon of Whitsun Eve the Commandant of *Città* called on the *sysselmann*,[1] Hr. Bassöe, and asked him to approach the Norwegian Government with a demand for help, as he knew the Norwegians were used to these things and could tell what could be done. The Commandant was full of anxiety with regard to the crew of the *Italia*, for, even if they had escaped from some possible mishap, they might not be able to survive—they might freeze to death. Bassöe reminded the Commandant of the two meteorologists, Mökleby and Simonsen, who, with a minimum of provision and kit, some years previously had kept alive in a rowing-boat for six weeks off the west coast of Spitsbergen, and that was in winter. " Well," remarked the Commandant, " but they were Norwegians, and used to cold and hardships ! "

Though the world's great papers had not previously been much interested in the *Italia* expedition, the disaster led to a complete change of front. One English paper, with a circulation of millions, which previously wanted only the shortest possible telegrams about the start and the return, now asked for everything that might be of interest ; wind, weather conditions—everything could now be used. Before the start it was well-nigh hopeless to get a contract

[1] The local customs authority, who is also a magistrate, and holds a number of other official posts.

with a paper, whereas now they, so to say, queued up for messages. At the small out-of-date station in New Aalesund they were up to their ears in work, and it is but a slight exaggeration to say that the wireless operator, Ludvig Saltnes, was the busiest man alive. All the newspapers that had not had the foresight to send a man to the town of polar flights now sent demands by the score : " Send as much as possible—send as quickly as possible—send *everything*. We must not be beaten," seemed to be their refrain.

That Whitsun was under whatever zodiacal sign stands for work, both as far as the *Città* and the journalists were concerned. Nobody knew anything, which made the work of both parties all the more difficult. It was a Whitsuntide full of worry and depression—no sun-festival indeed, no time of hope and promise. Of course, we kept on hoping in a kind of way, but the fact of this sudden silence on the part of the airship, of the sudden severance of all connection, told in unmistakable terms of what might have happened. On board the *Città*, every conceivable and inconceivable possibility was discussed. Map was piled on map on the tables in the saloon of the *Città*, and the possible route of the airship from the departure from the Pole until the last message in the morning of Friday, May 25th, was reconstructed.

From the outside world all sorts of messages and offers of help arrived. First of all came the two flying machines belonging to the Norwegian Government, the *Maake 36* and the *Maake 38*, piloted by Captain Riiser-Larsen and Lieutenant Lützow-Holm. Then the willing readiness of Amundsen and Dietrichson was hailed with unmitigated joy. The Swedish Government announced that it was sending several flyers, and the Italian Government also sent a couple.

The air squadron was soon to be increased considerably. The many relief expeditions put new life into the so-called

" barracks " telegrams. The news went from barracks to barracks : " Have you heard it ? An American airship is coming to search for the *Italia*, and fifteen aeroplanes." Then it was rumoured that ice-breakers and cruisers were on the way, and the final news was, " Do you know that a submarine is coming, with divining-rod and all ? "

Even the weather was hopelessly depressing—a most unusual kind of Whitsun weather, grey and foggy. The anxiety we all felt, the terrible uncertainty and the realisation of man's impotence, disheartened us all. A sentence which one of the young wireless operators of the *Città* let fall—he had, by the way, entered into an *entente cordiale* with Norway through a young girl in Bergen—aptly expressed the atmosphere during those grey Whitsun days when doubt lay on our minds like a nightmare. " Somebody was playing the piano to-day," he said, " and it was like flowers and dancing in a green field. There was hope in that music. It did me good. If only we could find the General and the others, then nothing in the world would matter."

The Italians did not know what to do, and they asked advice of all and sundry who had any knowledge whatsoever of Arctic conditions. Thus an American film man who had been on a tour of about a week's duration to Francis Joseph's Land was asked, " What are we to do ? Do you believe in dog teams ? " Cinematographers are not usually wont to hide their light under a bushel ; they let it shine over the whole world ; and this one gave the Italians much advice which it would have been very unwise to follow.

The *Città* now prepared to go northward. The drawback with regard to this ship was that it was made of iron, and therefore could not be said to be entirely suitable, as there was plenty of ice farther north. One of the journalists on board the *Città* used an apt phrase in one of his reports :

TWO OF THE DOG-LEADERS WITH SOME OF THEIR DOGS

"If only we had had an hydroplane instead of this slow ship, with its clumsy engines!"

The Alpini on board the ship prepared for action, should action prove to be necessary, and looked over their skis and sledges. The leader of the Alpini was the short, bandy-legged Captain Sora, the man of innumerable wars on innumerable fronts; the man who, later on, during the march he undertook with van Dongen to Foyn Island, when on their own they set out to rescue the wireless party on the ice, proved himself to be a capable ice-man.

The *Città* had acquired the services of Bernhard Svendsen as ice-pilot. For a long time the hope was entertained that one or other of the many hunters living to the north might have seen the *Italia*. Such men are keen observers, and they would certainly not miss seeing an airship flying above their heads. Einar Svendsen, from Kvalsund, an adventurer of renown, was at that time somewhere in North-East Land; Karl Bengtssen, of Bergen, with his cutter *The Geisha*, was at Reindeer Land; Arthur Oksaas, from Tromsö, was at Cape Ross, in Wood Bay; and that most famous of all hunters, Hilmar Nöis, together with the Swede, Sven A. Olsson, and Martin Nöis, Waldemar Kremer, and Rudi, lay at South Gat. There was not a minute to be lost, not to mention a day. But weather conditions may render men impotent, especially in these regions, where, as the saying goes, we have eleven months of winter and one month of bad weather.

The wind howled round the corners of the houses, shrieking past stockades and whatever else might stand in its way. Whitsun Eve was raw and nasty, and we had six degrees (centigrade) of cold and a piercing north wind. The *Città* was to leave about midnight, but, as the weather reports were anything but good, the departure was postponed until the following morning.

Before the ship set out on her northern voyage, the

manager of the mining company, Hr. Sherdahl, marked down on its map all the hunters' cabins. Invariably kind, easy-going, and unostentatious, Hr. Sherdahl was like a father to all of us.

Then the *Città* went north, and we were left speculating. Would the Italians find their friends; would they succeed in getting eastward, where there might be a hope of finding them? It seemed obvious that a tragedy had occurred, but how serious was it? Had all the sixteen lives been blotted out? Would the riddle ever be solved? Would the vast polar spaces keep another impenetrable secret, another Andrée-affair, with its element of mystery, its doubts, its many enigmas? Would the secret of the mighty polar ice itself, the inaccessible places in the riven mountains, the infinite icy expanses, ever be revealed? As we looked at each other our eyes asked many questions, but nobody knew the answers to them. All we could do was to guess, and, indeed, even in these very guesses a faint hope might lie hidden.

The second day of Whitsun we seemed to be back in mid-winter again. What little sun there had been now disappeared entirely, the wind blew incessantly, raw and penetrating, and the fog closed down on the mountain-tops more thickly than ever before. If the *Italia's* crew had indeed managed to land, the weather would be their worst enemy, and it would be a serious hindrance also for the *Città*. When the north wind sets the ice moving towards the north coast of Spitsbergen, and the fog stands like a wall, clammy, penetrating, and unbearable, it is impossible for a ship to move. Not a thing can be discerned, and in such weather it is quite useless for a search-party to land, for they might easily pass the flyers quite closely and yet be unaware of them. Even the weather gods had now entered into the conspiracy against the Italians, and everything seemed utterly hopeless.

A few days later the gloomy hull of the *Città* once more entered the fjord, and soon it lay anchored in New Aalesund harbour. Had the *Città* seen or heard anything? From the depressed faces of the Italians it was plainly to be seen that they had no news at all. It was a bad year for ice—the worst period that had been experienced for thirteen years—so it was impossible to get much farther north than just past Amsterdam Island. There the ice stopped all further progress. The ship, therefore, had to turn back after having landed four Alpini and their guide, Waldemar Kremer. Their intention was to go from cabin to cabin along the northern coast and ask whether the hunters had seen or heard anything of the *Italia* or its crew. Kremer was at South Gat with the hunter Rudi. They did not even know that an airship had flown to the North Pole a couple of days before. They had wintered there and had visited no inhabited place since the previous autumn. Their march to Mossel Bay was long and arduous. Nobody had seen the flyers ; nobody had heard anything. One hunter had, indeed, seen the *Italia* on its flight to Nicholas II Land, and that sight had cost him his two magnificent dogs. He was standing preparing poison bait for bears when suddenly he had seen an oblong green thing hovering above his head, and he stared and stared, marvelling at this most peculiar phenomenon. Thus he remained staring until the airship had disappeared, and when he turned to his work again he found his dogs had eaten the bait and were lying writhing on the ground. Before long they were both dead.

. . . . . .

From Mossel Bay, Kremer and his four companions went across the ice to the *Braganza*, a march that took them thirteen hours. From there they set their course for North-East Land, the land which has played such a great part in the *Italia* tragedy this summer. There they landed

at Wahlenberg Fjord, and went northward in a nineteen-foot boat, provided with two small tents, two sleeping-bags of reindeer skin, two ground-sheets, a gun and fifty cartridges, a revolver, a hunting-knife, compasses, flags for signalling, and one week's provisions.

Kremer attempted to walk on the ice, but there was much melted water on top of it, and it would have meant certain death to set out on foot, for when the night frost set in the water would freeze into a porridge, from which they would find it difficult to extricate themselves. So, as soon as the wind had abated somewhat, they had to row along the edge of the ice. In order to get a view of the ice, form an opinion of its distribution and of what possibilities there were of their making headway, Kremer landed and clambered up a small hill of stones. As he knew no Italian, he had to use gestures to make his companions understand that they must be very careful not to get the boat frozen in. In a quarter of an hour Kremer was back again, and the boat was then surrounded by large floes of ice which threatened to crush it together. It was a perilous situation. They should now have dragged the boat across the ice to the land, for it looked as though the incoming tide would set all the ice moving landward. But the Italians were unhandy at this work, and they made no headway. At length they succeeded in dragging the boat up on to a large ice-floe, and there the five men made tea and had a meal. They were now near Brandywine Bay, and Kremer showed the party Erik Nielson's cabin ashore. No sooner had he done so than the Italians packed their traps and wanted to make a bee-line across the ice for the cabin. Kremer explained by signs and gestures that a march across the unsafe drift-ice meant certain death, as the wind and the current would soon separate the floes from each other. But the Italians stuck to their own point of view—they would abandon the boat and Kremer should have a new

LEFT : ICE PILOT KESS RIGHT : HUNTER KREMER

one in New Aalesund, the Italians footing the bill. Kremer's reply was that if they gave him a hundred new ones he would not abandon his boat in the ice, as it was their only means of reaching land. The Italians, however, would not listen, and they set off. Kremer did not accompany them, hoping that the Alpini would soon come to their senses. He therefore remained in the boat awaiting developments, and in the evening the floes split up. Shouting and gesticulating, the Alpini were then standing on some floes which had begun to drift seaward. One of them finally succeeded in getting back to the boat across the floes, and he and Kremer managed to row out and fetch the other three. This occurrence frightened the inexperienced Italians, and, according to Kremer, they became somewhat more tractable.

But Kremer's adventures on the ice with the four Alpini were not yet at an end. They were now rowing towards land, which lay at a distance of five kilometres. It was impossible to row on a straight course, and they had to wind their way in between the ice-floes, occasionally poling, thrusting forward as best they could. Two of the Alpini refused to do anything at all. They gave vent to a flow of words of which Kremer could make nothing, and then lighted their cigarettes and sat smoking as though they were on a picnic.

The five men could not reach the shore, and they had to land on a small island. Again Kremer jumped across the ice-floes and climbed up a rugged rock to get a view of their surroundings. On his way back he met the four Alpini with their rucksacks and the rest of their kit—they had simply left the boat. In vain Kremer tried to convince them that their position would be perilous if they deserted the boat for a small island where there was no protection against wind and bad weather.

During his race with the ice Kremer had fallen into the

water, and he was now compelled to run about to keep warm. At the same time he had to look after the obstinate and intractable Italians, who scrambled up on the island and sat down to another pot of tea and a meal. Kremer again tried to persuade them to come back to the boat and make for the coast. But he might have been talking to deaf men. The ice froze to the sides of the boat, and Kremer had hard work to hack it away. Then it partly receded, and Kremer signalled by three shots that they must now get away as quickly as possible while there was a fair stretch of open water. But the Alpini did not appear, and at last he had to set off alone. After six hours of rowing he came to the cabin of the hunter, Karl Johnsen, in a bay to the south-west of North Cape. He had then been rowing for thirty-six hours at a stretch, and naturally felt somewhat fatigued.

Karl Johnsen had not seen anything of the *Italia*, and was, indeed, unaware that there was such a thing as an airship at Spitsbergen. In the afternoon both hunters rowed back to the island, where they found that the Italians had hoisted a kind of flag on a ski-staff and had gone to bed in their sleeping-bags, expecting somebody to come and fetch them ! It was late at night when the six of them returned to the cabin, where they were regaled with bear meat, new bread, and tea. Then they went to sleep on the floor of these primitive lodgings.

Next morning, when they were going to set out again, Kremer said to the Alpini that he did not wish to accompany them, as they were so impossibly obstinate. They then promised to act according to his instructions. As conditions here were better than farther south along the coast, they went on foot to North Cape, and arrived there after a fourteen hours' strenuous march. The *Hobby*, as agreed upon, was lying out there in the ice, and they were taken on board.

As they crept down in their sleeping-bags the previous night they caught sight of several ice-bears, and Kremer hid himself behind a mound of ice and despatched three of them. . . . The skins were good and warm, and, as the frost was severe, they were heartily welcome.

Thus ended Kremer's little adventure in a nineteen-foot boat with four Alpini. One must make excuses for the Alpini—they were not Arctic people, and they knew nothing of the conditions or the dangers of the regions in which they were now at large.

. . . . . .

The days were filled to the brim with the blackest hopelessness, and, to put it mildly, the Italians on board the *Città* seemed down and out. There was no ray of light, only black despair, and an unsolved riddle full of mystery and impenetrable darkness. In these anxious days we pressmen did not dare to go on board the *Città* ; we had the feeling that we were entering a house of mourning, and there one does not willingly intrude. If we saw the Commandant of the ship on land, and tried to approach him, we were met with a repeated shaking of the head ; there was no news, no news, they knew nothing. Day and night the *Città* sent out its wireless messages, in the faint hope that the *Italia* flyers might hear them.

Endless rumours were on the wing. The wireless amateurs entered the arena, and it became more and more difficult to discover what was true and what was not. On the 3rd of June, ten days after the disaster took place, a Dutch amateur in Huizum, named G. Werkema, declared that he had intercepted that afternoon, on a short wave-length, an S.O.S. which he thought was from the *Italia*. The message was much mutilated, and contained the following text : " S.O.S. S.O.S. Demandez secours envoyez secours force rester Italia." A few days later a Russian wireless amateur by the name of Schmidt, using a wave-length of

between 25 and 30 metres, intercepted, at 4.15 in the morning, a message of which he could make out the following words : " North-west storm S.O.S. Peterman." It was believed that the crew was on Peterman's Land, a hundred kilometres north of Francis Joseph's Land. No such message had been intercepted on board the *Città*, but that may be explained by the fact that short-wave transmission is more effective over long distances than over short. When I spoke to the Commandant about the messages of the wireless amateurs, he said : " In a case like this people hear and see much more than they would otherwise do, and amateurs hear more than anyone else. There may be something in it, but I admit I myself put no great faith in it. But of course we shall look into the matter."

The chief wireless operator, Captain Baccarani, toiled over his apparatus, trying every conceivable method, and then on Friday, June 8th, a fortnight after the terrible occurrence (of which we were yet unaware), the rumour spread that Baccarani had heard faint signals, which he maintained were the " writing " of Biagi on board the *Italia*. It was a ray of light ; perhaps the riddle would be solved after all. It was a happy day—though it *was* a Friday ! The wireless operator on duty jumped up from his chair and behaved like a perfect maniac, though of course no one else knew what had happened. At last he managed to gasp, " It is Nobile ! It is the *Italia* ! " It was just past one o'clock. The air was vibrant with electricity in more senses than one that afternoon. The joy was great and general, as when a person who has been considered irretrievably lost suddenly reappears.

Everyone on board, officers and men, crowded towards the wireless cabin, as on so many previous occasions, full of nervous excitement. Incessantly one heard them repeat : " *Italia !* Nobile ! *Italia !* Nobile ! " Another of the *Città's*

wireless operators was also listening in, and he plainly heard : " *Italia* calling. *Italia* calling," repeated several times. This first definite message was followed by several others which were too weak to be registered. The *Città's* wireless, which had now become, so to say, the pivot of the whole world, asked " Where are you ? ", but the *Italia's* wireless merely replied with the word " Francesco." Again the *Città* called, " Give your position," but no reply was received. The *Città* then addressed the voice from the desert of ice, " We have partly heard you. Save your energy. We will call again later when conditions are more favourable."

They waited until the sun had sunk lower and the air had become cooler. In the meantime, Rome was asked to tell the *Italia* to listen in about five o'clock in the afternoon. It was easier for Rome than for the *Città* to communicate with the *Italia*, as the wireless apparatus of the airship employed short wave-lengths.

Where was the airship ? How were the crew ? How many were alive—all, or only a few ? These were the questions we asked each other hundreds of times in the course of this eventful afternoon. Five o'clock came, and the excitement was at its height. Would they succeed in communicating again with the *Italia*, and definitely establish that it was really the airship that was calling ? Would the airship be able to give the position ? It was only a few minutes past five when a swarthy marine, quite out of breath, rushed up the little hill where the mining company's wireless station is situated, flung open the door, waved his arms like a savage, and yelled : " *Italia ! Italia ! Italia !* " pointing wild-eyed to the *Città*. That was sufficient for our wireless operator, who immediately stopped all traffic.

If the wireless cabin of the *Città* had been crowded before, it was now absolutely besieged. We leaned across each other's shoulders, craning our necks as far as possible,

listening for some word or other dropped by someone or other as he left the cabin. Various interferences prevented connection being made, and there was no result. But on board the *Città* they lived on the crest of a wave of optimism. The barometer had risen, hope had returned, and, now that something definite was known, life was again worth while. The air trembled with excitement, for the tension had not yet been relieved.

The excitement reached its climax on the following day, which was a Saturday, and the tension was then temporarily released. At 10.37 the *Città* registered several wireless signals which had certainly been sent by the *Italia*. All the messages were in Italian. The first were too faint to be intercepted, whilst the others were plainer. One of them was short but definite and ran " Italia calling 86891." That message was of vital importance, for it gave the identification number of Biagi. It was now established that it was really the *Italia* calling. Then the position of the castaways was given as being 80° 30′ north and 28° 04′ east. At last there was a definite objective, a definite position given. Still busier days dawned for the wireless operators on board, as well as for those on land. Smiling faces met us on board. There was a lively exchange of messages with the *Hobby* and the *Braganza*, which had gone northward, but for some time to come the greatest secrecy was maintained. It turned out later that the signals from the *Italia* had also been intercepted by the *Hobby*, and it soon proved impossible to keep the news secret, for the human barometer plainly showed what had happened. When, on the afternoon of this blissful Saturday, I called on Commandant Manoya on board the *Città*, I found him, so to say, a new man. When I asked if he could give me the position of the flyers, he replied : " I regret that I cannot give you the exact position until I have telegraphed it to *il Duce*." But, despite all dictators, such happy news as

this knowledge of their position could not be kept secret among a couple of hundred of Italians, and soon the startling news was ours. " Are they all alive ? " I next asked him. " Yes, that we know," was the reply. When the Commandant asked me, " What may I offer you ? Gin, liqueur, whisky, or what ? " he clearly proved that his mind had been relieved of a great burden.

Knowing the position, we now knew quite a lot. But the craving for news on board the ship was great, and the outside world was more than anxious to share our knowledge. It transpired that the *Italia's* crew were 45 kilometres north of the eastern point of Cape Leigh Smith, on North-East Land, and 25 or 30 kilometres to the east of the small Foyn Island.

The small reserve short-length transmitter on " White Bear Floe " was now able to send connected sentences, and day and night we were expecting new messages. Communication became more frequent, and it steadily improved during the days following that on which the first message was received. More reports from the castaways arrived, and soon we were told that they had been separated into two parties ; that one, consisting of nine men, was on the ice, whilst another, consisting of seven men, was with the balloon. The flyers could see Foyn Island and the coast of North-East Land, but they were drifting from two to three kilometres each day, according to the wind and current. One day the wireless on the ice reported that they had two casualties in their camp. The names were not given. Then it reported that three men had left the camp to try to reach land at North Cape, a march of 150 kilometres. Neither were names mentioned on this occasion. The flyers painted their tent red with aniline dye, so that it might be more easily discernible from the air when the aeroplanes came to search for them.

It has been said that the wireless party had a secret

communication with the *Città before* the 8th of June. For several reasons this could not have been the case, amongst them being the fact that we certainly would have discovered it at once. It would have been practically impossible to keep such news secret. First of all, there were several wireless operators on board, and they, as well as a number of others, would have been aware of any secret communication. By some means or other we should have got to know. Not for untold gold could the Italians have kept a secret like that !

The first report from Nobile regarding the disaster is dated Monday evening, June 11th. In this the General says : " We know nothing about the remaining seven of the crew of the *Italia*, consisting of our engineers, our scientist, the Czech scientist, and our rigger, as they were carried away with the airship, the position of which may possibly be 30 kilometres farther east."

This report looks strange now. It does not mention Pomella, who was killed during the disaster and buried by the flyers. That fact is suppressed. And, according to this report, the Czech, Behounek, was of the balloon party. What was the reason for these discrepancies ?

The position of the crew on the ice-floe was obviously anything but enviable. With severe rationing they had sufficient food for fifty days, but there were many things they lacked. They asked insistently for ammunition to keep inquisitive bears away, and also for collapsible boats in which to cross the open water if it should prove necessary to move the camp or to get to land, and sledges for the transport of the casualties, medicine and tobacco, but before everything else for pneumatic boats. It was now a case of keeping up the courage of the men on the ice until help could reach them, either by boat, aeroplane, or ice-breakers, or by the combined efforts of them all. Our days were more than fully occupied, and there was an activity

in the mining camp the like of which had never been seen before. Speedy action was essential ; the men on the ice were in need of many things, not least encouragement, and the ice might at any time drift away with them or destroy their camp. Their wireless might soon give out, creating a somewhat critical situation.

After the first happy day of definite information from the *Italia*, the men on board the *Città* returned to reality, and a certain nervousness was perceptible. What had they better do now ? Almost every day the *Città* was given the position of the castaways. On the 11th the party on the ice had drifted north-westward, to 80° 37′ north and 27° 10′ east. The news that the stern-most gondola had hit the ground when the disaster occurred, and that one of the engineers had been killed, leaked out. We could not clearly make out which of the engineers it was, for on board the *Città* they simply denied that anybody had been killed. When I heard the rumour I asked the Commandant, " Is it true that a man was killed when they crashed on the ice ? " His reply was, " No."

" That is absolutely certain ? "

" The General has not mentioned it."

" May I deny it then ? "

" Yes."

It was proved later on that the rumour was true, and that it was Vincente Pomella who had been killed ; but not until fourteen days later, on June 27th, did Rome send out the official news. So in reality the balloon party consisted of six men and not of seven, as Nobile had at first declared.

. . . . . .

If previously the pressman's position in New Aalesund had been difficult, his obstacles now became almost insuperable. I had it in black and white from Nobile himself

that I could go on board the *Città* and get any information that might be available, but the head of the Press Bureau, Commandant Romagna Manoya, was not always master of the situation. He easily lost his head, and, though he must be excused in so far as he was up to his neck in work, a word or two would often have saved the situation. This much, at any rate, is sure—that a good deal of the prevailing mystery, and the more or less misleading and incorrect Press telegrams which were despatched from New Aalesund in those days by some of the pressmen, must largely be attributed to the Commandant's lack of understanding of the work of the Press and our need to be told the main news items.

Romagna Manoya is a big-limbed man. In his youth, so he told us, he had been in Oslo, and had eaten large soft cakes in a café in Storgaten. He was interested in astronomy, and knew the Norwegian astronomer Einbu well by repute. He instituted a kind of censorship on board the *Città* for those of us who were sending telegrams to England or America, and, although the wireless section of the *Città* must have had more than enough to do, he made his operators pick up our English telegrams. When we came on board ten minutes or a quarter of an hour after we had sent out messages, he would say :

" You have sent such and such a message to America. I don't like that."

" How does the Commandant know ? "

" Let it be sufficient that I do know."

Some time after the disaster I assumed in one of my American telegrams that certain of the men would be with the wireless party on the ice, that certain other men were of the balloon party, and that the men who left on foot to reach land must have been so and so. This was before any of the names had been published. I went on board, and

THE ITALIAN HEAD-DEPÔT AT BEVERLY SOUND

was received by the Commandant, who, as soon as he saw me, flew at me in a rage.

" I am not satisfied with you."

" Oh ? " I queried.

" You have telegraphed the names of the men of the wireless party and of the balloon party to America. What do you think the families of the men will say when they see the names of their dear ones mentioned in this way ? "

" The Commandant will excuse me, but I think it must be admitted that the families, and all who have any connection with this affair, must know where the various individuals are—we all know what were their positions on board. As far as that goes, I might have been sitting in Oslo or in Rome and still have made the same guess."

" That does not matter. I am not satisfied with you, and I shall not give you any more news. You must realise that we have a censorship, a very strict censorship, in Italy, especially now."

" That may be so in Italy, but in Norway we have no censorship," I replied. " Could the Commandant give me the latest position of the *Italia* ? "

" Yes. It is . . . " and here he gave the latest position. " But I have much to do. Good-bye."

" Excuse me, just one more question. Has the Commandant heard anything from the *Braganza* to-day ? "

" Yes. The latest news is . . . " He mentioned the latest news regarding this ship. " Good-bye."

" Just one more question. What is the *Hobby* doing ? " The Commandant told me this as well, after which a perfectly friendly " Good-bye, sir," ended our conversation that night.

Another evening, when I went on board, the Commandant showed me an article from a Stockholm paper which had been translated at the Italian Legation in Stockholm and sent to the *Città*. " Is that your name under

this article ? " I glanced at it, and found that the article was signed by someone with a totally different name from mine.

" No, that article was not written by me."

" And that is a good thing for you," said the Commandant, " for the man who has written that is not our friend. I shall remember him if ever we should meet. Now what may I offer you ? Gin, liqueur, whisky—what would you like ? "

There was a crowd of journalists in New Aalesund after the disaster. Half of the inhabitants of the mining camp had turned to journalism. The local doctor represented an American Press Bureau ; the works manager was his rival, sending news to one of the papers in New York with an enormous circulation ; a high school student, who had taken on a job as pump-man in the mines, had his papers to write to ; a German cinematographer killed two birds with one stone as combined camera-man and correspondent of a world Press Bureau ; a Norwegian author had also turned to journalism, though he admitted it " was different from writing books." These were the amateurs. Then there were the professionals on board the *Città di Milano* : Dr. Tomaselli, Italy's polar journalist (who accompanied Amundsen to New Aalesund in 1926), and Dr. Aponte. On " gala days," Tomaselli despatched between ten and twelve thousand words by wireless.

It goes without saying that the town of polar flights was over-populated in these news-crammed months of June and July. In the end the mining company had to refuse to accept any more lodgers, for the simple reason that there wasn't a corner left unoccupied. One wag even suggested putting a price on the heads of journalists, which shows that there were enough of them ! The local hospital, a villa of one storey and a half, received the first patients they had had for ever so long, in the form of pressmen and

film-men. There was the German journalist who rigged himself out with exquisite gloves and a rainbow-coloured handkerchief, and used the glass of his watch as a monocle when he went on board the *Città*, for then he was sure to get news—fine news. Other poor mortals, with whom such tactics found no favour, often found it much more difficult to secure their daily bread in the form of Press material. There was the Italian pressman from the *Stampa*, Max Escard, who revelled in bright colours and had a five-pointed crown on his visiting card ; and there were a couple of Germans who, off the coast of Spitsbergen, on board a Norwegian sloop fitted up with wireless, made a sport of snapping up other men's telegrams. They even had the cheek to give their opinion of the messages to those they had robbed ! " We liked especially what you said about Maddalena—a jolly fine par. that ! "

Until the start for the North Pole the *Città* had its own hectographed newspaper, *The Pack-Ice*. It published three numbers, and that was all. In one of them there was a caricature of Amundsen, and a " poem " of twenty verses was printed below it. When I asked if I might be shown the paper, Tomaselli said that they had no more copies left, but the fact was that it was forbidden for anybody but Italians to see *The Pack-Ice*.

There was no lack of journalists wanting to go to New Aalesund after the 25th of May. An American wanted to fly from Norway to Spitsbergen, but, as he could not get anyone to pilot him, we never had an opportunity of making his acquaintance. A Dutchman who knew Spitsbergen from previous visits to the Archipelago, and who had tramped alone on foot across wide tracts of the country—his name was A. Hogendorf—arrived in Tromsö in the beginning of July with his own sledge, intending to search for the men of the *Italia* and give them his help. He wanted to get out there to write articles for, and send

telegrams to, the big Dutch paper *Rotterdamsche Maesbode*. He had planned a real adventurous trip, intending to land at South Cape, in Spitsbergen, and go northwards alone. But, as he himself told us, he was landed at the southern point of that strange island, Hopen, by mistake. There he was, alone for nearly a month, without a gun and with only ten pounds of provisions. To keep himself alive, he ate eggs and killed birds by throwing stones at them. As he stood on shore, just ready to set out in a boat which he himself had made, he was observed by the sealer *Skjoldmöen*, and rescued.

This Mr. Hogendorf called himself " The Flying Dutchman." He is a queer old screw. Once he went in darkest winter, absolutely alone, from the Dutch camp Bartelsburg, by Green Harbour, to Svea Mine, by Braganza Fjord, then right across the land to Agard Bay, on the eastern coast of the island, along the ice to Storfjord, then back again to Advent Valley and Longyear Town. Here he shaved himself on the ice in 34° (centigrade) of frost, so that, when he met folks, he would look fairly respectable !

The rival cinematographers tried all manner of means to find a ship to take them northwards. One of them wanted to hire an ice-breaker ; another one, of a lazy disposition, asked if there was no regular steamer service to North Cape on North-East Land.

Everybody had his own work to worry about. One of the amateurs sent the following telegram to his American Press Bureau every day for a couple of weeks : " No news *Italia*." And he got so deeply fixed in this rut that he quite automatically despatched the same telegram after the *Città* had established wireless communication with the *Italia !*

Rumours poured in in a perfect deluge. The man of the "No news *Italia*" telegrams had a most fertile imagination,

and he set the strangest tales afloat in order to hoax the others. Some people swallowed his bait, but it brought him no honour. Rumour once informed us that a hunter on Amsterdam Island had received a message from Nobile on the day of the disaster warning him that he must be ready to receive the airship, as they intended to land there. Considering that a gale was blowing from the west, and that the airship's position was far east of Amsterdam Island before the disaster occurred, this message does sound somewhat absurd.

An amateur journalist quite happily let the *Italia* suddenly drift from 80° 30′ north to 82° 30′, which would have been quite a sensational event if only it had occurred ! Another killed Ceccioni, but fortunately we were soon able to revive him again. The Malmgren group was found by someone else who was trying his hand at journalism very nearly three weeks before they were actually discovered. On one occasion the *Italia* was started three times in one single morning by one man. The explanation was that our hours of telegraphing were 8 o'clock in the morning, 11 o'clock, and 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Naturally we all tried to be first in reporting the start—that was what we were there for. So, in order to be on the safe side, our colleague sent a telegram at 8 o'clock, hoping that the start would then take place, and when it didn't come off he recalled the first message and sent a new account of the start next time the office was open. Unfortunately, the *Italia* was not ready to start on this occasion either, and the correct message was only despatched at 4 o'clock.

It was not all honey being a pressman in those days in New Aalesund. On shore there was no direct censorship, but we certainly got only a minimum of news—if, indeed, we were able to wring a few drops out of the man concerned. But the position of the journalists on board the *Città* was still worse. Commandant Manoya simply and

openly censored their messages, cutting up their stuff with a broad and firm pen. On one occasion Tomaselli, for instance, had written something about the bears in the vicinity of Nobile's camp—that was crossed out. All this censoring annoyed Tomaselli, who said to me, " I'll give you that if you can use it. The Press must be free. The Press must and shall be free." This he repeated with some vehemence. On certain days the journalists on board were not given a single word to send. " We shall have to talk about the weather again," said Tomaselli, " for, though we have paid dearly, we don't get a single syllable." Strict orders were received from the highest quarters in Rome as to how the Press censorship must be carried out. The Norwegian pilot on board the *Città* was forbidden to speak to people on shore, and was specially warned against journalists. This was an entirely unnecessary injunction, for the pilot, poor man, always bolted as soon as he caught a glimpse of us.

There was greater activity than ever before in the mining camp, where nobody had dreamt about such a whirlpool of thrilling events. We were in the centre of the world's focus, which for several weeks was to be found 80° north.

CHAPTER IV

Which tells of an extraordinarily helpful world ; of the "Robinsonade" of Lützow-Holm and his mechanic, Myhre, on North-East Land ; of how Riiser-Larsen and Lützow-Holm helped to find Nobile's camp on the ice ; of how Maddalena found it at last ; of how we were waiting for Roald Amundsen to arrive in New Aalesund ; of a French visit to the flying camp in Virgo Harbour ; and of the rescuer, Captain Lundborg.

We were now in the first week of June. Little by little patches of the mountains began to show up black where the wind had swept the snow away. The mountains also began to sport other colours—browns and reds and the most maidenly pinks—and where the fjord terminated the King's Glacier shimmered blue in the rays of the midnight sun. Occasionally a sound of thunder announced that gigantic blocks of ice were crashing down into the ravines or on to the fjord-ice at the foot of the glacier. Sometimes they came like perfect avalanches, with a cloud of white following in their wake. The forces of Nature were at play, reminding us puny creatures of our insignificance. Winter had at last released its stranglehold on Nature, colours asserted themselves, and the monotonous whiteness of the snow had to yield to brighter hues—whilst the sea took on the blueness of Mediterranean waters, as if to make a special appeal to our southern visitor, the *Città*, in the harbour.

Slowly spring appeared, while our thoughts dwelt on those at home in Norway—"down in Norway," as we say up here—who would now be holding themselves ready, with white sails gleaming in the sunshine, to receive summer on Oslo Fjord. But even here they were making ready for the boating season. One of the miners was looking over his motor-boat, tarring its keel in a sharp north

wind which carried the smell far and wide. The man was standing in a trench of snow—six feet deep—a nice spring picture for June! Our friend the snow-bunting—the sparrow of arctic regions, but almost white and far more beautiful than its namesake from the south—trilled and whistled merrily. In the mountains the kittiwakes made an unearthly clamour, while flocks of auks flashed past.

It was on Whitsun Eve, May 26th, that the *Città's* Commandant asked the *sysselmann*, Hr. Bassöe, to approach the Norwegian Government with a request for help—speedy help. And the Government immediately mustered its naval airmen. The Italian Minister in Norway, Count Senni, strongly impressed by the urgency of the matter, also requested the Government's aid. The Italian Government, however, expressed its appreciation of Norway's readiness to help, but at the same time requested that no further efforts should be made with regard to relief measures, as the Italian Government itself was considering the necessary steps to be taken.

When the *sysselmann* reported to the Commandant of the *Città* the contents of the Italian note to Norway, the latter would not at first believe it. Might there not have been a misunderstanding? We who saw events at close quarters—and who knew how vital was immediate action in such cases, where a matter of hours may make all the difference between life and death to the castaways—did not understand it at all. One thing, however, is certain. If there had not been so much delay and muddle on the part of Italy, the men on the ice would have been saved long before. And it is quite possible that the airship would also have been saved.

The *Braganza*, which was lying in Tromsö, made ready during Whitsun and arrived in New Aalesund on Saturday, June 2nd, early in the morning, as that capable Arctic skipper, Svendsen, had put on full speed the whole way.

At six o'clock he went on board the *Città* to see the Commandant—being under the impression that, since human lives were at stake, it was necessary to get northward as soon as possible ; but he was received with the information that the Commandant was asleep, and that he had better come back again at ten o'clock. When the skipper returned he told them immediately and in plain language that if he could not see him at once he himself was going to sleep, for he had had no rest for several days and nights. Then at last he was allowed to see the *Città's* Commandant.

In the meantime a private collection had been organised in Italy for relief measures. These collections were at once forbidden—the Government would see to everything. More delays ! Up here the Italians were waiting and waiting for their great hope, Major Maddalena. Wasn't he coming ? Why did he take such a long time ?

Before any other flyer had appeared, Lieutenant Lützow-Holm arrived in New Aalesund on board the *Hobby*. That was on Monday, June 4th, the eleventh day after the catastrophe. No one could have arrived sooner. On the small space on the deck stood the new *Maake* 36. It just fitted in there, with a millimetre between itself and the railing. On the second day of Whitsun, three days after the disaster, Lützow-Holm and his mechanic, Myhre, had set off from Horten to Tromsö—a flight of twenty-three hours. Round the machine the dogs from Advent Bay were now lying, with the leader, King, at their head, very anxious to be off. They far preferred snow and ice to a ship's deck. They had done a good two thousand kilometres that winter, and they would only have considered the short trip like the one before them as a pleasant break in the daily round. Easily satisfied, they lived on a pound of dried fish a day, and a draught of water, which, with miniature ice-flakes swimming on top of it in the bucket, was a wonderful drink ! The flyers left Horten in the midst

of Whitsun, and there was no time to lose. They therefore had to get part of their outfit in New Aalesund. A make-shift ski-sledge was knocked together from a pair of ordinary skis and a couple of boards, and lashed to the floats of the *Maake*, and Bassöe was deprived of his gorgeous sleeping-bag and several maps. The *Hobby* called at Advent Bay on its northern course to pick up the dogs. On the deck stood Tandberg, book-keeper to the Store Norske in Advent Bay, and an unusually capable dog-driver, chiding one of his dogs who wanted to fight. Near him stood the hunter Hilmar Nöis, beaming like the sun itself. He knew every stone there north, had every point of the country at his fingers-ends, having lived for years alone with Nature in those desolate tracts. He is a man who in some strange way always appears when he is needed—a trusty man, always smiling, who has lived so long the happy, free life of the open, together with the beasts of the barren wastes, that he himself looks like a fox. At least, so one of his friends maintains. Thoroughly capable are these hunters. Nothing can beat them. Take, for instance, Waldemar Kremer, who accompanied the four Alpini from South Gat eastward—he is both a hunter and something of a scientist. He has undertaken surveys and observations for no less an institution than the Royal Frederick's University in Oslo ; and he has been a skipper, and is a linguist.

Lützow-Holm and his mechanic, Myhre, did not rest long in Aalesund. The two airmen had more than their hands full with the work of preparing to go north. In the early evening on the day of its arrival the *Hobby* left King's Bay on its northern course, four days before the happy tidings from the ice reached the outside world. At the quay the simple Norwegian relief expedition was given a hearty send-off by the officers of the *Città*. The ship carried all their hopes with it. On the next day Lützow-Holm and Myhre took to the air in their *Maake*. They

NORWEGIAN SEALER "QUEST"

flew from Biscayers Bay, round the islands off the north coast, and in across the land, but, as Lützow-Holm had already foreseen before the departure from New Aalesund, they saw nothing of the *Italia*. He was the whole time of the opinion that the *Italia* must be looked for on the polar ice itself, north of North-East Land, and not, as the Italians maintained, at New Friesland between Vidje Fjord and Hinlopen Strait.

The situation developed with lightning rapidity. The scene in the harbour changed day by day. Coal steamers arrived and departed, fishing smacks came for coal and water to feed their engines, motor-cutters chuffed to and fro, and the Arctic ships, the *Hobby*, the *Quest*, and the *Braganza*, as well as the *sysselmann's* boat, the *Svalbard*, paid us little French visits of a day or two's duration, picking up crews and outfits before going north again, while rowing-boats and motor-boats completed the picture. A coal steamer brought us a greeting from the far south in the form of a monkey called Jokke. It followed its lord and master on shore, picked up a handful of snow, smelt it, and quickly threw it down. Jokke's great fears were of motor-cars and dogs. He was spared the sight of motor-cars here, but occasionally he came across a decrepit dog—at the sight of which he clambered up on his master's head until all danger was past.

The second flyer to arrive was also a Norwegian. It was the robust Riiser-Larsen, together with his able mechanic, Bastö.

. . . . . .

While the airmen stayed in New Aalesund two things occurred which made them hasten their departure as much as possible, in spite of the weather conditions—for fog and heavy snowfalls had closed down on the mining camp—the message from the *Italia*, giving its position was received,

and another message arrived which we Norwegians felt rather keenly—Lützow-Holm and Myhre had not returned to the *Hobby* after an observation flight east of Verlegen Hook. A couple of days had passed, and Lützow-Holm's machine could only fly at a fair altitude for five hours. Obviously something must have happened. Was it possible that the excellent flyer and his equally capable mechanic had lost their lives during the flight eastward ? If they had gone down among the screw-ice their fate would immediately be sealed. Had their only motor failed ? Had the fog engulfed them, forcing them to land wherever they could ? Had they escaped with their lives ? Weather conditions were impossible—the wind was changeable, and suddenly the fog would set in so thick that one could not see a yard ahead.

Riiser-Larsen was anxious to get away northward. He did not say a word about Lützow-Holm and Myhre not having returned to the *Hobby*, but there was no need. I knew it. When I asked him if it was true that the two flyers had not returned, he said, " They are supposed to be on board the *Hobby*."

" Couldn't you be kind enough to send a telegram to the *Hobby* to make sure ? " I asked.

He said he could very easily do that. But he never sent it, for the very good reason that he knew the flyers had disappeared, that nobody had heard from them, and that it would be useless to make any enquiries.

This was on Saturday, June 9th, and about one o'clock in the morning Riiser-Larsen and Bastö very quietly slipped away. They sneaked down to the quay, hoping to avoid being filmed, but in this they were unsuccessful, for four or five photographers had taken up their stand there, and they almost upset each other's cameras in their eagerness to " immortalise " Riiser-Larsen, his mechanic, and their machine. Upwards of twenty photographers, amateurs all,

clicked their cameras as hard as they could, but, with all their efforts, they did not get much of a picture, for the flyer turned his back on them as he pulled on his flying-suit. A couple of hours later Riiser-Larsen landed by the *Hobby*.

Not until Monday the 11th, four days after Lützow-Holm had left the *Hobby*, was the riddle regarding the two flyers solved. Their " Robinsonade " had ended happily, heaven be praised !

The flyers' own account was that they had left the *Hobby* at 9.20 on Wednesday. Thirty miles east of the point where they had started they ran into a fog, which debarred them from attempting to return. They then sighted land at Lav Island on the west coast of North-East Land, searched the coast, and set across Brandywine Bay, where Roald Amundsen and his companions had landed with the *N 25* in 1925 after their miraculous flight to 88° north. The fog was by now so thick that it was impossible to fly at an altitude of more than 30 feet. At the south-western arm of Brandywine Bay all further progress became impossible, as the clouds were now right down on the snow, necessitating an immediate landing. It was then 10.35 in the evening. There was no possibility of getting away during that night or on Thursday, but nevertheless, at the slightest sign of the fog lifting, they made several attempts to start during Thursday. The ground was bad, as the new snow on top of the frozen drifts made a very uneven starting-place. They could get no speed on the machine. In the course of the afternoon the flyers cleared the ground sufficiently to be able to set off on Friday morning at 1.30, after thirteen vain attempts. The night frost had improved the ground, but, in consequence of the many unsuccessful efforts to take off, the petrol supply was much reduced, and the question to decide was which inhabited spot could be reached with a minimum expenditure of petrol. They

decided on Mossel Bay, where they knew they would find some hunters called Svensen, and at 2.35 in the morning the two " fugitives " landed near these astonished men. Lützow-Holm then set out alone with the now much lighter machine towards the *Braganza*, leaving Myhre with the hunters. The airman had to start in a semi-circle, as the area of useful ice was very small. He enclosed in a box a report of what had happened, and requested the *Braganza* to find some more petrol. He then circled round the *Braganza*, and great was the joy when suddenly he appeared pointing to the box, which he had thrown down on the water. Riiser-Larsen, Nöis, and a few other men drove the dog-sledges loaded with petrol on shore, and Lützow-Holm got what he needed. He had then only five litres in his tank.

When the airmen were resting in their sleeping-bags in Brandywine Bay, they heard the polar bears sniffing round, studying them at close quarters. The bears were also much interested in the flying-machine, which must have been a rare sight for the Kings of the Arctic. Not many days had elapsed before Riiser-Larsen and Lützow-Holm together flew to the spot where Nobile had reported he and his crew were to be found. The Norwegian airmen were the first to get near to the camp—but that is another story.

. . . . . .

As the days went by many messages arrived from all over the world ; everybody was most anxious to help. Norway had already sent two of her most capable and cool flyers, and now it was reported in the town of polar flights that Roald Amundsen, Lincoln Ellsworthy, and Lieutenant Leif Dietrichson were coming with a big Dornier-Wal machine. (Unfortunately these noble helpers did not get this machine, otherwise we should probably still have had our two dear countrymen with us.) The Swedes speedily offered their assistance ; they conferred with Riiser-Larsen

CAPTAIN RIISER-LARSEN'S PLANE ON BOARD THE "BRAGANZA"

and other experts in Oslo, and were given much good advice regarding the expedition of the two vessels, the *Tanja* and the *Quest*. The Russian minister in Oslo, Madame Kollontay, asked the *sysselmann* for certain information, as her Government desired to send two of their extremely powerful ice-breakers, the *Krassin* (formerly the *Sviatogor*) and the *Malyguin*, both with aircraft. They were also considering asking America to send their large airship, the *Z R 3*. Finland sent its compact little single-engined Junker machine, *Turku*, with the flyers Lihr and Sarko. When the arrangements for the big German machine fell through, France offered a helping hand by putting her flying-boat *Latham* at Roald Amundsen's disposal. Finally the Italians themselves arrived, though it took them a long time to reach New Aalesund.

Six nations sent their best men, and the whole world had its eyes fixed on Spitsbergen in hopeful expectation. When the sun flamed from its high vault there could be no thought of sleep, neither for airmen, pressmen, nor filmmen—the competition was too keen for that.

I wonder if people generally are aware of how many vessels—sealers, ice-breakers, coal steamers, warships, and other kinds—searched the Arctic seas for the *Italia* and its crew, and for Amundsen ; and how many aeroplanes were finally engaged in the risky task of finding the missing. Innumerable names of vessels and airmen were continually paraded before the eyes of the world during those busy days of June and July. The whole thing was like a film, which had been speeded up to such an extent that it was difficult to follow it. It may be of interest to mention that the following fourteen vessels were directly engaged in the attempts at a rescue : the *Città di Milano* with a crew of 220 men ; the *Braganza* with about thirty ; the *Hobby* with fifteen ; the *Quest* with the same number ; the *Tanja* from Gottenburg with twenty ; the sloop *Heimland* with fifteen ;

the French cruiser *Strasbourg* with 475 ; our own warship *Tordenskjold* with 250 ; the *Quentin Roosevelt* with thirty ; the *Pourquoi Pas* with between twenty and thirty ; the patrol boat *Michael Sars* with thirty ; the *Vesslekari* with two expeditions ; Miss Boyd's expedition on board the *Hobby* ; the *sysselmann's* smack the *Svalbard* ; and the French oil-tanker the *Durance*. In addition to these there were the three ice-breakers, the *Krassin* with a crew of one hundred and forty, the *Malyguin* and the *Sedov*, each with about a hundred men on board, and also several fishing smacks, some of them hired and others searching on their own, hoping to win the large sums offered as a prize to those who found the castaways. Twenty-two aircraft were in action : four Norwegians (*Maake* 36, *Maake* 38, and two Sopwith baby planes) ; the Swedish triple-engined Junker machine *Uppland* ; two Swedish *Hansa* machines ; and a small Fokker, Lundborg's *31* ; the Finnish single motor *Turku* ; Penzo's Dornier-Wal ; Maddalena's *S 55* ; Chuknovsky's three-engined Junker ; and Babuschkin's machine of the same type ; a Swedish *Moth* ; a new Swedish Fokker substituting Lundborg's machine, which was wrecked on White Bear Floe ; Ravazzoni's *Marina I* ; Amundsen's and Guilbaud's *Latham* ; two small Italian aeroplanes ; one Klemm-Daimler ; and two French hydroplanes on board the *Durance*. Two dog teams were employed, with altogether nineteen dogs, of which nine succumbed on the polar ice. To all this must be added the enormous quantity of petrol and oil, the spare motors which had to be substituted because of the hard flying and severe conditions, the outfits, spare parts, etc. The Swedes alone calculate that their expedition cost 200,000 kroner or more ; the mere reparation of the *Krassin* in Stavanger cost 60,000 kroner ; and approximately 1,400 people were directly engaged in the search for the missing men.

But all this effort, work, and material would have been

MISS LOUISE A. BOYD, WHO SEARCHED FOR THE "LATHAM" ON BOARD THE NORWEGIAN SEALER "HOBBY"

sacrificed gladly. The pity of it is that it must now be considered as certain that fourteen lives have been lost through the disastrous *Italia* expedition.

The air was alive with news. It was like operating in a witch's cauldron. Wireless messages flew to and from ice-breakers, fishing smacks, and aircraft—the *Krassin*, the *Malyguin*, the *Hobby*, the *Braganza*, the *Vesslekari*, the *Tordenskjold*, the *Strasbourg*, the *Michael Sars*, the *Città*, the *Quest*, the *Tanja*, and the stations at New Aalesund, Green Harbour, and Advent Bay were all at it. It was a case of English spoken, *Man spricht Deutsch*, *On parle Français*, *Her tales Norsk*, and heaven knows what they do in Russian—all through the ether.

The Italians were anxiously awaiting their great hope, Major Maddalena, with his Savoia machine, the *S 55*. We heard that he had started from Milan. Then we were told that he had to turn back again. Another message stated that he would attempt to fly across the Rhone Valley, Marseilles, and Lyons, and from there northwards. Then there was another start, the airman arriving at Lausanne, where he had to come down because of bad weather.

On board the *Città* the Italians were talking early and late about Maddalena and his machine—he was going to save Nobile and all the rest of the men of the *Italia*—he was flying from Rome right up to New Aalesund in three days. Unfortunately the three days were multiplied several times before he arrived. At length he reached Vadsö via Stockholm. Twice he made unsuccessful flights from Vadsö. On the second occasion he had reached Bear Island when he had to turn back because of the fog. But the third time he did get through, though he was forced to land on Bear Island because his motor failed.

On Monday evening, June 18th—a beautiful sunny evening—the engines of his silver-grey craft suddenly

droned at a great altitude above the camp. The aeroplane appeared 4,500 feet up, above Zeppelin Mountain, circled round the camp until the houses and the quay on which I stood were fairly shaking, then made a tour across the fjord, and finally set its noisy course for the *Città*. The first word Maddalena said after landing was : " Petrol."

He was escorted on board the *Città*, where officers and men gave the unassuming airman a hearty reception after his flight from Norway to Spitsbergen—a distance which it took him eight hours to cover. The *Città* hooted its welcome with all its might.

Apparently he had run into a fog near Bear Island, and during the crossing he kept an altitude of between three and six thousand feet. One of the motors had been a little awkward, but he had managed to keep it going.

On the after-deck of the *Città* they were now busily preparing the provisions and outfit which Maddalena was to try to throw down to the Nobile party on the ice. The General's brother, Professor Nobile, eagerly took part in the work. They packed pneumatic boats, medicine-chests, bananas, smoke-guns (which were first tested on deck), spare propellers for the flying machines, rucksacks, and *finsko* (the moccasin-like footgear of the Arctic), all well wrapped up and marked. Meanwhile the *S 55* took 3,000 litres of petrol on board. Maddalena and his men snatched a couple of hours rest, and then they set off northward. Nobile had reported a little while before that the position was getting rather critical—provisions were running low, they had insufficient clothing, and only two blankets. Their camp was very wet, the bears were getting unpleasantly inquisitive, and the ice was breaking up round the floe on which they were camped, while they were drifting this way and that. They felt more hopeless than ever. They had seen the Norwegian airmen, but they were a couple of kilometres away. According to Nobile, it was

proved later that the reason for our airmen taking the wrong course was a miscalculation on the part of Viglieri. Futhermore, the islands in the vicinity were marked off wrongly on the map.

But now the proud Italian bird, the *S 55*, was setting off to try its fortune. Would Maddalena succeed in finding Nobile and his crew? All our thoughts were with the sixteen unfortunates. Would he return with information about the six men in the balloon, and the three who had gone towards land—those nine men of whom no living being knew anything? On board the *Città* one could read the men's thoughts. Not that it was ever a difficult task, for there was really only one subject in their minds: Can we tear our sixteen comrades out of the embrace of the polar ice?

After six hours' absence Maddalena returned. Officers and men rushed to the railings in the hope of catching a word, any slight sentence. Full of expectation, they looked like living marks of interrogation: "Has our airman Maddalena good news?"

The *S 55* had just stopped its roaring motors, Maddalena stood on one of the floats, and Romagna Manoya and Professor Nobile had come by motor-boat to hear the result of the flight. But even at a distance it was obvious that the result was a negative one. Maddalena spoke in his southern manner, with many gestures, "*Niente*, *niente*, *impossibile vedere*."

On that day Riiser-Larsen and Lützow-Holm made their third vain attempt. On this occasion also Nobile saw the airmen, but what was the good of it when the men on the ice could not get the provisions and things they needed so badly? The Norwegian flyers soon realised that a wireless apparatus was essential, and that that alone could save the men of the *Italia*. Riiser-Larsen therefore explained the position to the *Città*, asking Maddalena to instal a

short-wave-length apparatus which could put him in communication with the castaways. In this way Viglieri could direct the aeroplane towards them—that was the only possible method of approach. At the same time Riiser-Larsen asked Nobile to hoist some clothes on to a mast made from parts of the gondola.

It has often been asked why our flyers contributed so little to the work of rescue. The idea that our men did " so little " is a fallacious one. First of all, it must be remembered that the aeroplanes at the disposal of our airmen were quite small, their maximum flying period being five hours. Secondly, one must remember the extremely difficult conditions, the impossible polar ice, the devilish fog which more than once might have put a final stop to the activity of our courageous flyers. On one occasion they left Wahlenberg Fjord, and, after an hour's flying, fog set in, forcing them to return to the *Braganza*. The moment they landed near the mother ship they and the immediate surroundings were enveloped in fog as in an impenetrable blanket. And it is impossible for outsiders to judge what it means in these tracts when a motor gives out. As a rule, there can only be one result—certain death.

During the search our airmen flew no less than 7,500 kilometres across the northern part of Spitsbergen. There were millions of tents to be seen on the ice, said Riiser-Larsen, millions of vessels, millions of aircraft, and everything else one might wish for. How, then, could it be possible to find anything without a wireless ? When there was no fog the ice hemmed them in, and when the ice released the ship the fog again settled down.

There was a glorious opportunity for thrills. On one occasion when Riiser-Larsen and Lützow-Holm were flying in the same aeroplane, the water in the motor began to boil as they approached the mother ship where there was open water. The airmen had barely managed to slip over

CAPTAIN RIISER-LARSEN WITH HIS PLANE

the edge of the ice out into open water when the motor gave out.

On the voyage northward from New Aalesund, when the aircraft stood on the deck of the *Braganza*, a storm which swept out along Hinlopen Strait threatened to hurl one of the aeroplanes into the sea. A swinging boom, with its blocks and tackle, was belabouring the machine badly.

Our flyers indeed did bigger and better work than anybody has any idea of. A telegram to the airmen from the chiefs of the Italian Admiralty and Air Ministry emphasises the value of their work : " Maddalena's results could only have been achieved by your generosity and bravely acquired experience, which we shall always treasure and never forget. We thank you both."

. . . . . .

Encouraged by the Norwegian airmen's good advice, Maddalena made another attempt. The wireless of the men on the floe was obviously beginning to give out, and it was of importance that they should evolve an easy method of communication between the aeroplane and the wireless party. So a simple and short system of signals was agreed upon.

Early the next morning (to be exact it was still night, but what does that signify here north, where the midnight sun obliterates the difference between day and night ?) Maddalena was again flying on a course set for the tiny spot where the six men had lived through those terrible weeks, oscillating between bright optimism and black hopelessness, and with one of their members " in bed " with a broken leg. Maddalena was only away for seven hours. It was obvious that the flight had succeeded ; the *Città's* syren blew three blasts of welcome, and there were enthusiastic shouts of " *Evviva Maddalena ! Evviva Maddalena !* " The swarthy sailor in the rigging called his " *silenzio.*"

Everybody crowded round the airmen to hear their story. Eyes were glistening in those southern faces, and the General's brother exclaimed : " This is my first day of sunshine since the start." A happy smile wreathed his face ; there was a flame in his young eyes. Maddalena told simply and without any frills of those thrilling seconds when the four men in the aeroplane swooped down, at a speed of 120 kilometres, to within a couple of yards of the treacherous polar ice. If the motor had stopped then it would have meant certain death to all on board. With admirable courage he manœuvred eleven times backwards and forwards across the camp, where six men were standing in a state of the greatest tension, their nerves strained to breaking point. Biagi directed the flyers from the ice : " Slightly to the right. . . . Slightly to the left. . . . Now you are right above us." In a flash Maddalena and his three companions caught sight of the men, and the coveted parcels, tied to the parachutes, were dropped. Five of the six men were standing at some distance from each other, using some kind of flags as signals, but in the next second the airmen had lost sight of their comrades, and shadows thrown by the ice-peaks made it impossible for the human eye to focus them again. Once more the manœuvre was repeated, the airmen straining their eyes for a glimpse of their friends. Maddalena was then in the vicinity of Foyn Island, and Biagi signalled : " You are flying away from us. Come back again." The aeroplane turned back, and Biagi sent a new message : " Fly in a circle, with a radius of 750 metres." The next instant Maddalena and the other men again caught sight of their countrymen, who were jumping with joy. Maddalena even had time to observe that Nobile, standing on a hummock of ice, was wearing his white jersey.

A short time later, Maddalena, with whom I was tramping the deck of the *Città*, was simply one large joyful smile :

" It was the grandest experience of my life," he said. " But what a pity I could not slip down and take them all back with me." For an instant his eyes darkened : " Imagine being only a few yards from safety—I could almost have touched their heads. Those were tense moments. I wanted so much to land on the ice, but there were other lives on board the aeroplane besides my own, and I was responsible for them. With me were Lieutenant Cagna, the mechanic Rampini, and Signor Marsano. It was Marsano and Biagi who together directed the aeroplane by wireless. And it was Marsano's first air trip ! It must have been very exciting for him. It was difficult to keep a hold upon oneself when we discovered the men below us. Before we actually saw them, misled by the strange formation of the pack-ice and its many colours and shades, we thought that we had spotted them, but soon we discovered that it was an illusion. If we had not had the wireless we should never have found them, for the vivid play of the shadows on the ice blotted out the difference between illusion and reality."

Maddalena demonstrated vividly how for one instant he had seen the castaways, and then they were again hidden from view. " We came like this," he said, holding his hands out in front of him, " in this direction, and there we saw the men below us on the ice, and—*huit !* (he swung his hands wide) they were gone ! "

Small wonder that Maddalena was the lion of the day.

No sooner had the *S 55* returned than Nobile was able to tell the *Città* by the aid of the wireless that they had found all the packages—they weighed together about 600 lbs.—and that they were now being brought in. The wireless material was smashed, but a later flight brought them what they needed. The General said in his message : " I kiss and embrace the airmen who brought us succour."

The men of the *Italia* had now received an accumulator

or their wireless, which by that time was almost exhausted, and without the aid of which the men on White Bear Floe would probably not have been saved. They got three pneumatic boats, boots, clothes, blankets, a cooking-stove, medicines, and many other things they had asked for. And not the least important thing was that the visit of the aeroplane had given them new courage and revived their hopes.

Two days after Maddalena's arrival in New Aalesund, Sergeant Nilsson, in the Swedish Junker-type bomber, the *Uppland*, flew from Tromsö to New Aalesund, and was immediately followed by the Italian Major Penzo in a German Dornier-Wal. The *Uppland* had accomplished the journey in six hours and ten minutes, the Swedish airmen being the first to make the non-stop flight from Norway to Spitsbergen.

The flyers wanted to go north at once, and when one of the officers from the *Città* arrived by motor-boat to bid them welcome on behalf of the Commandant, and to ask them to come on board for a rest and a meal, the Swedes simply replied, " Thank you very much, but we are going north at once."

The wireless operator of the *Uppland* was standing on the wing of the plane, writing a telegram to Stockholm announcing their arrival. He called into the cabin to Nilsson : " Shall I send a wire to your wife as well ? "

" Yes, do," came the reply, whereon the operator composed a message to the airman's wife.

The Swedish relief ship, the *Tanja*, had by then arrived at Virgo Harbour on Danes Island, with three flying-machines on board, and now the *Uppland* set off after a rest of three-quarters of an hour. It was a most business-like performance. A few days later the Finnish aeroplane *Turku* arrived on board the coal-boat *Marita*. By now there was quite a considerable air force in the Arctic. No less

than nine machines had already arrived, and more were expected shortly.

. . . . . .

The latest news in the mining camp was that Roald Amundsen was expected, with Lieutenant Dietrichson, the French airmen Réné Guilbaud and B. de Cuverville, the wireless operator Valette, and the mechanic Brazy. The rumour spread like flame in dry grass. The crew on the ice would certainly be saved now. The Italians felt quite sure of it, and the rest of us were equally certain now that " Roald " was coming.

The evening of Amundsen's expected arrival was filled to the brim with the tumultuous joy of the polar spring. God's beautiful midnight sun hung as a blessing over the most northern mining camp in the world. The workmen were speaking with enthusiasm of how they were going to receive their hero ; they wanted to give him a royal salute—twenty-one guns was not too much for " old Amundsen," as they lovingly called him.

We were sauntering about all night—one night of watching more or less did not really make much difference. We just waited, as so often before. So far north one hears little or nothing of what takes place in Norway ; Spitsbergen seems to be as far removed from the mother country as is the moon from the earth. Even such news as Amundsen's impending flight—at that time it seemed likely that he would be the first flyer to reach the archipelago—reached us very late, and we had no certain information regarding the time of his departure. We had heard rumours of the impending departure from Tromsö of several big machines, and on board the *Città* they said that Major Penzo was expected on a certain evening, so we decided that, as it was safer for two machines to fly together, Amundsen would be coming at the same time. On Tuesday, June 19th, a

brilliant night, we heard the drone of motors high above the peaks—the whirr of a mighty eagle's strong wings. It was the Swedish Junker, there could be no doubt about it, and a few minutes later Penzo's Dornier-Wal arrived. But where was Amundsen's French craft ?

We went out to meet the Swede. The aviator Nilsson, plump and broad as a real polar explorer in his kit, put his head out of the door. He and his companions were greeted with shouts of welcome from the motor-boats and rowing-boats, and as soon as he had acknowledged them he was asked, " Isn't Amundsen with you ? "

" Hasn't Amundsen arrived yet ? He started yesterday."

A faint uneasiness stirred within us. He started yesterday ! Where was he, then ? Anxiously we looked at each other. What was he up to now ? What were his intentions ? Had he made straight for the wireless party or the balloon party, intending to land on a possible stretch of open water ? It sounded fantastic in view of the size of the machine, for he would scarcely expect to find open water of several kilometres extent near the camp on the ice.

Another period of excitement and anxious waiting. Whenever we heard a motor droning in the air we rushed out, be it night or day. " Amundsen—Amundsen." But always we suffered disappointment, and nights and days passed without news of him. Not one of the vessels that were trying to rescue Nobile and his men had seen or heard anything of the *Latham*. We often caught ourselves looking towards the mountains, searching clefts and glens, as if we expected to see our own heroes appear. And why not ? Suppose the machine had suffered some damage which could not be repaired ? Amundsen had so often before had a surprise in store for the world, and many things might happen to an aeroplane—a motor is, after all, only a motor. . . . Our hearts were heavy with foreboding.

From all quarters the question was asked, " Any news

LIEUTENANT DIETRICHSON (on extreme left) AND ROALD AMUNDSEN, BEFORE EMBARKING IN THE " LATHAM "

of Amundsen to-day?" The miners were burning with impatience for news of their hero. Then the Italians of the *Città* came to enquire, as did the fishing smacks which put in to coal, the sloops, and the coal-boats—all were filled with this one subject: Amundsen—where is he? What has happened to him and his five companions?

"What has become of your countryman?" Commandant Manoya asked one evening as we were walking the deck together. "Why has he not reported here to me?"

"The Commandant knows that Amundsen is a man who acts according to his own ideas, and a man who generally knows how to get along."

"Yes, but why has he not applied here, to me? I have the positions and all other details."

"Possibly Amundsen was of the opinion that speedy aid was essential—he may have made straight for the balloon party, about which we know nothing. You may be sure he knows what he is doing."

The Italians generally were under the impression that Amundsen and his five companions were under the command of the *Città*. Indeed, Italy has asserted that if Amundsen had put himself under the guidance of the *Città* he and his men would have been alive to-day. A couple of days after my conversation with the Commandant, another journalist came on board, and he also had to endure many reproaches which Manoya directed against Amundsen. At last my colleague considered that things had gone far enough, and he said shortly: "I have no wish to discuss this matter with you," and straightway left the ship.

When our aviators, Captain Riiser-Larsen and Lieutenant Lützow-Holm, were locked in the ice near North Cape on North-East Land, the Swedes kindly offered to search the western and eastern coasts for them with their big Junker machine. Major Penzo in his Dornier-Wal flew

to Bear Island, but he saw no trace of them. And indeed how could one find anything in this desolate waste, this infinite ocean, which one second may lie so shiny and calm, and the next arise in all its might, in violence and defiance ; where currents and gales ravage like things possessed, and where only very rarely some vessel, a coal-boat or a sealer, is to be seen ?

There was no evidence that the aviators had flown inland. The fact that they enquired of Ingöy wireless about the conditions of the ice near Bear Island might mean that there was something wrong with the machine which necessitated the finding of a landing-place. Immediately after that the wireless messages ceased. There was no reason to think that this was proof of an accident having occurred, but the connection had been quite lively until then. They might have had trouble with the engine ; they might have broken a wing ; the petrol might be dirty, or perhaps have caught fire !

Was it not possible that the *Latham* had entered the belt of fog which Maddalena had encountered the same day as Amundsen flew across the Arctic Sea ? Maddalena had been forced down on Bear Island to repair his engine. He remained there about an hour, and the fog had by that time increased considerably and was probably about six thousand feet high. If the *Latham* had got caught in such a fog, the moisture would probably have caused a heavy deposit of ice on the aerial, and the airmen would be unable to communicate with the outside world. If they had been forced down by engine trouble or fog, the heavily laden machine would not have been able to weather the rough sea which raged at that time. The *Latham* weighed ten tons when it approached Bear Island, and perhaps the machine, the boat of which was built of thin wood, could not resist such rough treatment.

Those who knew Amundsen were aware that he was,

COMMANDER PENZO'S DORNIER-WAL

beyond all other men, a man of many surprises. He went to the South Pole when he was supposed to go to the North Pole, and he was as likely to make straight for the balloon party as for New Aalesund. He had indeed said to his old friend and assistant, Captain Wisting, "We shall meet again in New Aalesund," but that might have meant that Amundsen expected to meet his friend when the rescue had been effected.

When Amundsen left Bergen all attention was centred on the wireless group, and it would not seem unreasonable that the fate of the balloon party was foremost in the explorer's mind, for not a living soul knew anything about them. Had they escaped with their lives? Had they all escaped, or were some of them dead? Once when I mentioned the balloon party to the chief of the *Città*, and asked if they were not to be searched for, he replied: "The rescue of the wireless party on the ice-floe is the most urgent matter. The men with the balloon have a better supply of provisions and are not in such a precarious position." We had the definite impression that, at a very early date, the men of the balloon party had been given up as lost. When I called on the Italians and the Swedes in Virgo Harbour the day after the rescue of General Nobile (June 25th), I was told that Sergeant Nilsson with the *Uppland*, Maddalena with the *S 55*, and Penzo with his Dornier-Wal would fly together eastward to look for the balloon party, and if they were not found then further search would be abandoned. Later on the Russians arrived, and the question of the fate of the balloon party was thereby brought into prominence.

Roald Amundsen was never much given to discussing his plans, but before he went from Bergen to Tromsö he did say certain things to an intimate friend which led one to believe that he meant to search for the balloon party. "The wireless group is better off than the balloon men,"

he said, " for they have, at any rate, their wireless, so they are aware of what steps are being taken. They can tell the world outside what to do and ask for what they need. It is the balloon group that needs help most."

If a vessel arrived in the harbour in those days the first question we invariably asked when we came on board was " Are you from the south ? " If the reply was in the affirmative, the next question would be : " Did you see anything of Amundsen or his machine ? "

" No. And I don't suppose you have heard anything here ? "

" No."

When on its way to New Aalesund the steamer *Sörland* of Grimsstad (Captain Bengtson) noticed a glittering object in the sea—something like a propeller moving faintly. When they approached it, they discovered that it was only a whale taking a rest !

One fine day our armoured cruiser, the *Tordenskjold*—the first Norwegian warship in these waters—entered the harbour. The 250 men on board asked a thousand questions, but they were given questions in return. The small Sopwith baby planes on the after-deck had been hard put to it in the bad weather during the search to the west of Bear Island. It was even feared that the seas would smash them. During nearly twelve days there had been reasonable flying conditions on only one day. When there was a swell the machines could not be launched, as the boom was so short that they would have bumped against the side of the ship. Lieutenant Lambrechts attempted a flight one evening under very unfavourable conditions—there was fog at an altitude of 150 feet, and a short distance away from the *Tordenskjold* it came right down to the sea. Occasionally the vessel entirely disappeared, so that the aviator had to search for it, but fortunately he returned safely. On the sea nothing could be seen.

On board the warship we also found the aviator Captain Emil Horgen, of *Norge* fame, one of Amundsen's good and trusty men ; and on board the *Michael Sars*, which came from the south after weeks of searching in the Arctic Ocean, we met the naval flyer Trygve Sundt, and the skipper of the vessel, Captain Willoch, who had met Malmgren and several others of the *Italia's* crew in Vadsö before their departure. On its long and tortuous course from Bear Island, where the *Michael Sars* was stationed when it was ordered out to look for Amundsen, nothing had been seen of men or machine. We discussed every possible reason for the disappearance of the airmen, whether they had made for the balloon party or had been overtaken by disaster, but we got no further—some thought this and others that, but no one knew. But it was interesting to notice how dispassionately the Norwegians accepted the hard fact that the flyers were lost, that not a trace, not a strip of material, a piece of wood, a flying helmet, nor anything else had been found which might give any indication of the fate of the *Latham*. There was no despair—a certain anxiousness was indeed manifested, but no despair. We were all hoping, and it is good to be able to hope.

Advice and rumour were not lacking. One day a wire arrived from Tromsö—it was anonymous—advising the search of Lambach Bay (which was not to be found on any map), as that was the place where Amundsen and his companions would be found. Two workmen, who had passed along the western coast of Spitsbergen on their way to Advent Bay on the day after Amundsen set out, thought they had seen a machine come down in Horn Sound—it looked about a yard long, they said.

It has been stated that Amundsen and Dietrichson were satisfied with the performance of the *Latham*, that they raised no technical objection to it. This is not the case. Amundsen did not indeed publicly state that there were

details of the machine which ought to have been improved ; but neither of the two was entirely satisfied with the type of the motor. They mentioned these things to intimate friends, but they refrained from public statements. The matter was so urgent, the position of the castaways became so much more critical every day that went, that every hour counted. It was action that was needed, and Amundsen, knowing better than most men the trend of popular gossip, knew well what would be said had he not got away : " Oh-ho, he is funking it—that is not like him ! "

Since Amundsen's disappearance certain individuals have not hesitated to sully his name by circulating the tale that he would not hear of any co-operation with the Swedish, Italian, and Finnish airmen when they started from Tromsö. As long as Amundsen stayed in Tromsö he was the guest of an old friend of his, whose house he did not leave until his departure. There was no communication between him and the foreign flyers. On one occasion Amundsen said, " Perhaps we ought to have had a conference with the other aviators ? " To which his friend replied, " Yes, it is strange that they have not approached you." The Swedish Consul in Tromsö also can bear witness that nobody mentioned to him the matter of co-operation during the flight.

Two years previously, when Roald Amundsen had at last realised his thirty years dream of crossing the North Pole to Alaska, he said, " Now I will stop. It is for others to continue. But if anybody should need my help, be it in the north or the south, I am at their disposal." And these were not mere words—he was indeed never given to idle words—so when it was a matter of saving the crew of the *Italia* from certain death in the ice, our polar explorer immediately offered his services, unconditionally, without a second thought. He indulged in no flourishing speeches, there was no delay—men's lives were at stake and instantaneous aid

was required. Roald Amundsen was always a man of action—energetic, quick, and intuitional—a real man, who did not invariably meet with everybody's approval in this our narrow little country, where everybody wants to be chief, each on his own little hummock. No man could have blamed Amundsen if he had now retired for good, and left others to settle the *Italia* tragedy, but he had said that if anybody, be it in the north or in the south, needed his help he would willingly come forward. A pledged word is a pledged word, when a man is a man.

It was a strange coincidence that Roald Amundsen departed from Oslo for the north, exactly to the day, twenty-five years after his start with the *Gjöa* through the North-West Passage. The tiny vessel, a mere nutshell, left the harbour of the capital in the evening of the 17th of June, 1903, and at 11 o'clock in the evening of the 17th of June, 1928, the intrepid explorer once more set out for the unknown. A whim of fate very nearly saved one of the six flyers on board the *Latham*. It was originally intended that two of the Norwegians should proceed to Spitsbergen by boat, as the *Latham* had only enough room for five men besides the outfit. Wisting went north by boat, and one man should have accompanied him, probably either Amundsen or Dietrichson. Was it a premonition of coming evil that made a young lady say at the Östbanen Station as she timidly approached Amundsen, asking permission to shake his hand before he departed, " Pardon my boldness, but I am only doing what at this moment thousands of others feel urged to do." And with sincere emotion she added, " Do be careful. Norway cannot afford to lose such a son as you."

Nowhere was Roald Amundsen more beloved than in New Aalesund. The men who seek a living there realised what he has done, and they are in a position to appreciate the value of his work. That is proved by the results of the

public subscription made for the memorial at his birthplace near Sarpsborg. In the course of a few days four hundred and forty Norwegian kroner—that is about four kroner a head—were collected in the mining camp, whilst Norway's capital, from which he so often set out on his famous expeditions, did not contribute more than a thousand. New Aalesund has gained world renown, thanks to Amundsen's pioneer flights, by aeroplane and by airship, in 1925 and 1926. This is the place where Amundsen, through his flight to 88° north, made world history, when Dietrichson made his heroic start from the fjord-ice with the bolts loosened in the fuselage of his machine ; when Riiser-Larsen smartly took off from the Polar ice, at a time when we and all the world waited anxiously for three weeks before our airmen could give a sign of life ; when the great miracle happened which seemed almost incredible to us humans. The flyers had only themselves, their own energy, and their own brains to trust to. Nobody helped them out of their difficulty, unless Providence aided them. Every man in the mining camp remembers to this day the historical moment when they started from the ice, and the coolness of the airmen on that occasion is still spoken of with the deepest admiration. At that time, as is well known, the Norwegian Government—Norway being the only country who in any active manner attempted to succour them—sent a relief expedition north under the leadership of Lützow-Holm.

At the very moment when he stood by his machine near the quay, buttoning the last button of his suit before taking to the air, the arctic ship *Sjöliv* arrived from Brandywine Bay with our polar flyers on board, so bearded and dirty that they were hardly recognisable. The directors of the coal company erected on the shore a simple stone in commemoration of the flight to 88° north. On it is inscribed in alphabetical order the names of the six men, and in

summer-time tourists always visit the place. The following year our polar hero was to realise at last his thirty years dream of the conquest of the North Pole, crossing the hitherto unknown region from Spitsbergen to Alaska. The *Norge* flight was his idea, the result of his many years of unswerving work as a polar explorer. He himself ultimately took his pilot's certificate, got the flying machine *Kristine* on board the *Maud*, and laid his plans for the flights of 1925 and 1926. He had indeed assistants, many of them extremely capable, the best men in their respective branches—but the honour of having planned it, having seen it through, and of putting life into the work—that honour is Amundsen's and no other man's, and no living soul can rob him of it.

And then he set out for his last voyage—perhaps the noblest of them all. The finding of one of the *Latham's* floats on the coast of Norway seems to prove beyond doubt that it was on the flight from Tromsö to Spitsbergen that Amundsen and his companions lost their lives. It was in the early evening of Friday the 31st of August that the sloop *Brodd* (skipper Hareide) off Ytre Fuglöy, not far from Torsvaag lighthouse, sighted an object floating on the water. It was at once clear to the men on board that it was a part of a flying-machine, and that it presented the solution of the problem which for months had occupied all Norwegian minds.

" Thus shall eagles die and adventures end."

. . . . . .

Most of the flyers had left New Aalesund. As it was of importance to get as near as possible to the wireless party, they had moved their base northward, many of them wanting to make their headquarters at North Cape in North-East Land, or even still further east. But here the

ice prevented further progress. Some of the Swedes were in Virgo Bay and some by Hinlopen Strait, and our own men made their flights far north from the *Hobby* and the *Braganza*. The gigantic Italian birds, the *S 55* and Penzo's Dornier-Wal, could easily operate from New Aalesund, where also the Finnish *Turku* was clear for action. After Maddalena had found the wireless camp on the ice there was great rivalry amongst them to pick up the castaways on White Bear Floe.

" I'll pick them up, you'll see ! " said the Finn Sarko.

" We'll fetch them. Just wait," maintained the Italians.

It became a point of honour with the Italians to rescue them, and the other aviators looked upon it as a chance to show the world what they could do. So they all put forward their best efforts.

Midsummer Day, and we were dreaming of fragrant birches after a shower of rain at home, about green arbours and bonfires on the skerries and along the shore, and of midnight picnics in field and forest. We went by motor-boat to the lagoon—a tongue of land jutting out into King's Bay, with a large duck-pond right in the middle. There we boiled our coffee on the bonfire, as at home in Norway. The birch branches were lacking and snow still covered most of the mountains, but at the foot of them there were faint attempts at greenness where saxifrage and other Arctic glory peeped forth. When we returned home in the early morning the *Città* emitted a series of joyous hoots, while the anchor was weighed. Something must have happened. For several days we had heard that it was going north, and now it was really off, and in a great hurry too. There we saw Maddalena set out, then Penzo, and finally Sarko in his *Turku*. Something must have happened there north, we said, and later in the day this view was, indeed, confirmed.

Nobile was rescued !

THE " QUEST " IN PACK-ICE

To begin with, that was all we knew, and it was therefore the business of the pressmen to get to the *locus in quo*. So that was why the *Città* had gone north to Virgo Bay. Unfortunately, there is no road to that place, neither is it possible to reach it by swimming through the ice-cold water. A boat was required. They say in Spitsbergen that a man is no man at all without a boat and, if it should be necessary to move about, one is forced to acknowledge the truth of that saying, however short one's stay on the archipelago. A boat here is almost as necessary as air under ordinary conditions. At home in Norway and elsewhere in the world, we look at the tiny map and say : " Oh, yes, one centimetre to such and such a place, that's not far." But when it comes to tackling a certain distance in earnest one discovers how far it really is. A cinematographer wanted to get to Spitsbergen in a hurry last spring, and his firm telegraphed to him from New York asking him to charter an aeroplane. But no air company would take on the job. In Germany, for instance, they said that they would rather fly the Atlantic ! When the cinematographer was returning, he wired his firm : " Arrange flyer in Tromsö take film to New York." Revenge is sweet !

On Sunday the 24th of June, when Nobile was picked up on the ice by the Swedish airman Lundborg—precisely a month after the unhappy flight of the *Italia* to the Pole—it was a question of getting as quickly as possible from New Aalesund to Virgo Harbour, with a fairly good boat a voyage of from ten to twelve hours. As luck would have it, a fishing smack was lying at the quay of New Aalesund. It took on the job, and on Sunday evening I left with a couple of German cinematographers. It seems strange that when the *Città* left New Aalesund on Sunday morning all news ceased, and that Rome, Stockholm, and Oslo, for instance, knew about Nobile's rescue sooner than did we in New Aalesund.

Well, we went northward in the most wonderful midnight sunshine, and, although there was a slight haze, the baking sun and the thought of obtaining the first interview with General Nobile made one laugh at such a slight inconvenience. We pictured in advance the whole scene—in his happiness over his rescue the General would, of course, tell us everything, and he would be glad to be filmed. "*Es gibt feine Bilder*," said the Germans gleefully, with their right hands turning an imaginary handle. The first cameraman on the spot, the first journalist ! All must be prepared beforehand, wherefore I carefully noted down every question I was going to ask. We could not sleep for excitement. There was a reek of fishing-nets and herring-barrels, and the engine seemed to be singing a merry song with the well-known Norwegian refrain :

" If it goes, then it goes."

We slipped along through the swell of the glittering seas, with the sun beaming over us all through the long night. The engine gave us another song : " Virgo Harbour, Virgo Harbour, Virgo Harbour." The coast we were passing was impossible, desolate and barren, with snow, all the way right down to the edge of the bluish-green water, only receding where the glaciers stooped right into the sea. There they stood, sheer walls of ice, and woe to him who passes this place on a day when a gale is blowing landwards. With not a foot of soil to cling to, one would be hopelessly lost in the grip of elemental forces. Danes Island appeared through the haze ; a gimlet-pointed peak stuck out, and we knew that we would soon be in Virgo Harbour. We were right off the harbour now, and occasionally we entered a bank of fog, apparently resting on the water, and a raw wind began to blow. No *Città* was to be seen, no *Tanja*, no flying-machines ! It would be a fine thing indeed if, after coming up here, we failed to find the object of our search ! But then we discovered the gloomy

hull of the *Città*, conspicuous against the snow-clad spit of land jutting out from Amsterdam Island. So it looked as if Nobile, at any rate, was safe. And look there—there too was the *Tanja*, hidden away in Virgo Harbour in Danes Island, looking like a dent in the mountain side. It was early in the morning, just half-past five, and an unearthly hour to disturb people. Numerous seals were sunning themselves on the snow-field, the place from which Lundborg took off, peering in wonder at the strange metal bird. The flying-machines in the harbour appeared to be greeting us with nods of welcome. There were the wide-winged, comfortable Swedish Junker, Maddalena's bird of prey, and Penzo's compact Dronier-Wal. Further north, right up by Hinlopen, three Swedish flying-machines, and still further north, at North Cape, the two little Norwegian birds. The first sign of life on board the *Tanja* was the appearance of the white-clad cook, putting his head out of the door. An interview so early in the morning was out of the question—the cook had his coffee-kettle and his breakfast to see to. But gradually the ship woke up, we climbed on board, and were soon greeted in a homely fashion by the Swedish airmen, whom we last met in New Aalesund after their flight across the Arctic Sea.

" Have you heard anything about Amundsen ? " The flyers were obviously anxious to hear our reply, which was short enough, " No news."

We soon fell to discussing the possibilities of Amundsen's survival. The barren, inhospitable nature of the land and the raw, western wind which drove the fog from the ocean into the bay did not help to make us feel optimistic.

On shore we saw a few bits of plank sticking out of the ground—the remnants of Andrée's balloon-shed. The Andrée affair is another polar mystery which to this day, thirty-one years after, remains unsolved. Here and there

a simple wooden cross stooped over some Dutch grave, hundreds of years old, and a few human skulls and bones were scattered about the ground. On Deadman's Island, out in the sound, more graves could be discerned. Only the green moss of the mountains and the bands of snow in the clefts broke the monotony. We thought how strange it must seem to the Swedes to search these tracts for another of their countrymen, who, fighting for his life, had decided to march, practically on bare feet, across the drift-ice to the shore, and who had probably succumbed with exhaustion during that hopeless march.

Nearly thirty-one years ago, on June 11th, 1897, the three intrepid men, Salomon Andrée, Nils Strindberg, and Knut Frænkel, set out from this spot with their thirty-six pigeons—the wireless of those days. People said it was tempting fate, and perhaps it was, but it was a brave man's deed, and—nothing venture, nothing win. They had made an unsuccessful attempt the previous year, and were now trying again. Andrée was the pioneer of polar exploration from the air. It is probable that he did not get further than somewhere between Spitsbergen and Francis Joseph's Land. But now his countrymen had arrived with much more modern contrivances than the balloon *Örnen*, which was anything but dirigible. Andrée was dependent on weather conditions to a far greater degree than are his countrymen here, now. He had to trust himself entirely to the wind, on whose strength his speed largely depended, whilst now his successors rush through the air at 160 kilometres an hour. It was a very simple departure when the balloon *Örnen* set out that day in June in a fresh breeze from the south-west, and at 2.30 Andrée gave the command "Cut the rope, boys—one—two—three."

"Good luck, Andrée," shouted the Swedes on the ground.

"Remember us to old Sweden," replied the balloonists.

And one hour later the *Örnen* had disappeared behind the sharp profile of Vogelsang, and was never seen again.

. . . . . .

It was now upwards of noon, the fog had ceased to drift down on us, and the sun shone over all. Was it a good omen for my interview? Perhaps I should soon be allowed to see Nobile, to hear his own account of the catastrophe, of the terror of the actual occurrence, of their hardships before they managed to establish wireless connection with the outside world, of their suffering from cold and fog whilst they drifted on the floes, their disappointment when they saw Riiser-Larsen and Lützow-Holm flying near and not discovering them because they had no wireless, of their waiting for food and medicines and other necessaries to sustain life; and of their boundless joy when Maddalena found them by the aid of his wireless, and provided them with all they needed for some time to come. Would I succeed in making the General speak of all these matters, which the whole world was waiting to hear about? The cinematographers were of the opinion that all would go smoothly and quickly—we were going to get the General out on the deck, the journalist walking by his side, whilst the cinematographers turned the handles of their apparatus—a simple case of killing two birds with one stone!

In a great state of hopefulness we walked up the gangway of the *Città*, where we were intercepted by a cadet on duty.

"You must ask the Commandant's permission to come on board," was our first greeting. This was a merry beginning!

"We wanted to enquire if we might see the General."

Our enquiry gave rise to a significant sarcastic smile and southern movements of arms and shoulders.

"I will ask the Commandant."

Before the cadet disappeared he said, " You must not speak to anyone here—it is forbidden—only to the Commandant." And, turning to a cluster of officers and men, he admonished them thus : " It is forbidden to speak to these gentlemen—no one must say anything."

After a short absence the cadet returned.

" The Commandant will see you in an hour."

So we waited, letting the cold wind blow upon us to its heart's content. An hour elapsed, two hours, but no Commandant. After three hours he at last appeared, and asked brusquely : " What do you want ? "

" I want to ask for an interview with the General. The whole world is waiting for news, especially details of the rescue. As I am also representing a Swedish paper, and it was the Swedes that rescued the General, the Swedish nation would much appreciate—and indeed they feel entitled to know how it all happened."

Much annoyed, the Commandant replied : " I don't care for any newspaper in the world, and, if the Swedes want news, their own ship is there." He pointed to the *Tanja* lying nearer land. " You can go and do what you like there, but I have nothing to say. There will be no interview with the General—he is in his cabin with a broken leg, and is both unable and unwilling to receive anyone."

" It need only be a matter of five minutes."

" I said no."

" I have written down a series of questions here—would the Commandant kindly hand the paper to the General and let him reply ? "

" No."

" Perhaps the Commandant himself could furnish the reply to some of the questions ? "

" Certainly not. There is no information available, not even for my own journalists."

" Are there many bears near the camp ? "

GENERAL NOBILE, AFTER BEING RESCUED BY CAPTAIN LUNDBORG

" I couldn't tell."

" Is the General very ill ? "

" I told you he has a broken leg."

" Is he feverish ? "

" Somewhat."

I wanted to put another question to the Commandant, but it was of no use to address merely a broad back. One of the Italian cinematographers wished to speak to one of his German colleagues who had some connection with the Italian's firm, and had booked certain pictures from them. The cadet rushed up, waving his hand in front of the Italian's face, and cried : " You must not speak to him —it is forbidden. I shall report you to the Commandant."

Titina was tripping about on the deck, happy to be " home " again. She had been a very important member of the expedition. In the camp of the castaways she had actually frightened a polar bear. She got on her hind legs and gave vent to her most impressive bark. The bear was taken aback for a moment, and then he slinked off ! Immediately after the disaster the good lady was huffy. Not even Nobile was permitted to stroke her, and it took two days to bring her round again. About a week later, when Riiser-Larsen came south from North Cape, Titina immediately knew him and began dancing round him, but the Captain did not recognise the dog—the black markings on her back had turned brown during the imprisonment on the ice.

The meeting on board the *Città* between our airmen and Nobile was most moving. In a lengthy conversation the incidents of the last few weeks, the disappearance of Amundsen and his friends, and the rescue of the still missing men were discussed. During his long stay in the northern part of Spitsbergen Lützow-Holm had adopted a beard, reminiscent of the kings of our sagas. As the airman was now coming south to " civilisation," to take part in Miss

Boyd's search for Amundsen, he had to sacrifice this noble growth.

We found that, after his rescue, whilst the physician was bandaging his leg, Nobile had allowed himself to be filmed. It was a film of a good 2,000 feet. The picture, taken of him lying in bed, showed a quite new Nobile, very different from the General who departed from New Aalesund early in the morning of May 23rd. The unhappy sufferer in the bed was a broken man. His eyes were wide, stiff, and staring, his voice lower and more quiet than usual —almost colourless. The fate of the rest of the men weighed heavily on the General's mind. The criticism of the hapless expedition had hit him hard, and there had been a controversy between him and the Commandant of the *Città*, the General wishing to direct all efforts to the rescue of the six men with the balloon, whilst the Commandant would not listen to the suggestion. It was also rumoured that the General said on board the *Città*, immediately after his rescue : " I might just as well have remained on the ice-floe—I was better off there than I am here ! "

To Lundborg, Commandant Manoya said after the rescue : " Why did you save the General first ? He is nothing but a trouble to us."

On board the *Tanja* we were received in quite a different manner—there we felt we were among brothers. Once more we had a lengthy discussion with Andrée's worthy successors. " It must be a strange feeling for you Swedes to work here where Andrée started his unfortunate polar flight," I said, " but at the same time you must feel very proud now that Lundborg has rescued one of the men of the wireless group. Presently he will pick up another of them."

" For the time being he will find it somewhat difficult," said one of the flyers, " for he remained on the ice the second time."

"He remained? Why was that?"

Then followed the simple story of Lundborg's smart flight of the previous night. In the evening of Midsummer Day Lundborg set off from the snow-field on the spit of land that jutted out from Amsterdam Island—a masterly take-off of no more than 150 feet. The snow was still covering the whole of the spit, and, though it was anything but perfectly even, Lundborg, the born flyer, handled his Fokker in a masterly manner, forced it up towards the high-vaulted sky, and swept northward, trusting to his machine, his luck, and himself. Lundborg effected a splendid landing on the ice—the other larger Swedish flying-machines circling above him—and then picked up Nobile and his dog Titina, surely the flightiest dog in the world. Well he knew that he was risking life and limb, but his decision was taken, and there was no more to be said about it. But he still was not satisfied—he made another attempt. He meant to pick up two of the castaways next time, wherefore he left his observer behind so as to have room for two passengers.

When Lundborg reached Foyn Island the motor failed, and he prepared to make a forced landing on the island itself. He managed to get the engine going, but above White Bear Floe it again failed, and Lundborg was forced to land, colliding with a mound of screw-ice. The machine turned a somersault.

One man had been rescued, but the rescuer himself was now in the same plight.

We were told about the joy on board the *Città* when Captain Tornberg arrived from Hinlopen with the General, about the cheers for Sweden when Tornberg entered on board the *Città*, about the Thanksgiving Mass on board the ship for the rescue. We gathered that Lundborg had had many hard knocks before this. Both in Finland and Estonia he had been attached to the White Armies. He

had soon distinguished himself on the north-west front under General Yudenitch, and he was made a captain when he was not much more than twenty years' old. A gloriously reckless boy who challenged danger, he never knew fear, and now he himself remained on White Bear Floe, the centre of the whole world's interest. Every nation praised his courageous deed, and all were agreed that his rescue must be effected next. This brooked no discussion. It fell to Captain Schyberg to make the hazardous landing number two on the floe, the centre of universal interest during those apprehensive days of June and July.

As time passes, more and more details are available about Lundborg's flight to White Bear Floe. He had hoped to rescue a couple more from the terrible embrace of the ice, but, instead of that, he himself was compelled to remain on the floe. Lundborg has admitted that when he came down he felt somewhat " small "—whereas he had come to save another man or two, he himself must now remain, heaven alone knew for how long. After the rescue the Czech scientist, Behounek, the man who, according to Lundborg, did not himself lift a finger to save any of the men on the ice, tried to make a big " story " out of it. Behounek has written in various newspapers that Lundborg collapsed, and that everyone on the floe was agreed that he must be the next to be saved. But the fact is that the Swedes themselves naturally decided which of the castaways should next be taken off by the small Swedish machine. This was but reasonable. Although the chief engineer, Ceccioni, was much more seriously injured than Nobile, the General had been picked up before anyone else.

Obviously it was no picnic on the drifting floe, but hunters in polar seas have more than once been in worse predicaments than that of the Italians and Lundborg last summer north of Spitsbergen. Nevertheless, alone and unaided, they managed somehow.

The reason for Lundborg's failure at the second attempt must be attributed to the fact that he had worked very hard for a long period without sleep, and that the flyers, once they had begun, were naturally anxious to rescue as many as possible of the castaway Italians. Further, on this second attempt Lundborg was alone, and his machine therefore, being light, whipped round easily. He had first brought the General and his flighty dog, Titina, in safety to Hinlopen, from which place Captain Tornberg, the chief of the Swedish flyers, escorted them to Virgo Harbour. Here it was obvious that the General was not so badly hurt but that he was able to climb up the side of the *Città di Milano* without aid.

It was a strange Midsummer Night for Lundborg—the weather was warm and fine, but what surroundings ! The dirty, unhappy, and needy men had scattered abroad their worn-out underclothes and the skin of the bear which Malmgren killed—this strange camp looked anything but cosy and attractive. After a couple of hours of well-deserved rest, Lundborg took the field glasses and scanned the horizon to see how far away might be the shore. He discussed with the others the possibilities of walking across the ice, but fortunately this idea was dropped. Up here the land seems so near, and those unaccustomed to the place are unable to judge distances. Messages of encouragement to the Italian castaways were received from the *Città di Milano*, and details were frequently given of what was being done to rescue them. Often they heard the drone of the motors above their heads. When Lundborg crashed on the ice floe, the leader of the Swedes, Captain Tornberg, asked if it would be possible to send Lundborg a daily message of encouragement. The reply was in the affirmative, but during the thirteen days he remained on White Bear Floe Lundborg received not thirteen messages, but one only !

In the warm weather the snow quickly thawed, the floe

was full of pools ; their position at last became untenable, and they moved their camp to where Lundborg's Fokker stood on its nose. Their minds were busy with such thoughts as : How long could they expect the floe to last ? When would help arrive ? How long would they have to remain in this impossible place under these impossible conditions ? When would that enormous machinery which the whole world had set in motion bring about their release ?

Though the polar bears as a rule are not dangerous in summer-time, and seldom attack men unless provoked, it was necessary to keep an eye on them.

The cooking of meals for the six men also provided them with some occupation. With the aid of a pair of rusty scissors, the flesh of an ice-bear was cut up and then browned on an aluminium plate on a fire fed with pieces of thin wood, formerly constituting the pilot's cabin, soaked in petrol. Then the fog set in—that close and clammy Spitsbergen fog which not even the wind can disperse. It is of a particularly cold brand, penetrating to the skin unless one is exceptionally well clothed. The chocolate served to the men was not exactly an alluring drink—as a rule it was full of hairs from the reindeer-skins in which the men were clothed. The men were not even sufficiently vigorous to clean their cooking utensils in the snow.

The wireless—the most famous wireless apparatus in the world—was a source of great comfort and encouragement. When the men heard the sparks or the rapid ticking of the apparatus, their drooping spirits were again revived. When one thinks about the wireless, which sent the message that caused the world to offer its aid, one cannot but think of the critical periods of other expeditions—of Shackleton's South Pole expedition on board the *Endurance*, and of Roald Amundsen's flight to 88° north with the two machines *N 24* and *N 25*. For five long months Shackleton's crew drifted in the Antarctic ice. They had no

wireless ; they had only themselves to trust to. Suffering great privations, they had to winter on Elephant Island until the brave Shackleton and six of his intrepid men managed to make their way to South Georgia and bring aid to the twenty-two men on Elephant Island. When Amundsen and his five men were lying 88° north on the polar ice, they had only themselves, their own brains, and their own energy to trust to. Though it cost them indeed three weeks of superhuman effort, they managed to pull through without mobilising the whole world and without endangering the lives of other men.

Apart from the fact that they did not know for certain when they would again feel firm ground under their feet, the men on White Bear Floe were in reality not in a desperate position. They had what they needed, provisions were adequate, and they were in constant receipt of messages, telling them of the steps that were being taken to help them, and they were able, so to say, to follow step by step the work of the relief expeditions.

The little band of unfortunates had a tedious time whilst they were waiting and waiting to be rescued. Aid seemed to be so near, and yet it was so far away. Trojani and Biagi were suffering from fever, and their condition began to look anything but bright. As conversational topics were the same day after day, discussions became less and less polite, and in the end turned into sheer quarrelling. Several possibilities were discussed, among them a united march to a small island, but the main question was what to do with the injured Ceccioni. Lundborg subsequently declared that madness seemed to be approaching when at last a flying-machine appeared on the afternoon of July 5th. It disappeared again, but merely to look at it rekindled their hopes. A little later another Swedish machine, the big triple-engine Junker *Uppland*, arrived and dropped various articles to Lundborg—as, for instance, chocolate, brandy, a

tent, etc. The man in the air and Lundborg, who had by now levelled an area for a landing-place on the ice, exchanged signals, Lundborg informing him that the ice was favourable for a landing. On the evening of the following day a small point appeared in the air. It turned out to be Lieutenant Schyberg's little *Moth*, which a few minutes later landed on the ice. The hour of rescue had struck, and Lundborg hurriedly climbed on board, so that no discussions might arise among the men on the floe as to who should first be saved, as one never knows what wrecked men may do ; and after a short flight Lundborg was safe among his friends.

CHAPTER V

Which tells of how the *Krassin*, the Russian ice-breaker, and airmen of several nations saved half the *Italia's* crew of sixteen men ; of the extra news-sheet in the north ; of van Dongen's and Captain Sora's perilous-march with a dog-team across the polar ice ; of Babushkin's involuntary stay on the drift-ice near King Charles' Land ; of the rescued men's return to New Aalesund ; and of the noble Finn Malmgren.

Not all the news which reached the world, via the wireless of the castaways, from the Red Tent on White Bear Floe was happy. Experts knew that the ice surrounding the Red Tent was not absolutely safe, and that it was possible that the floe might break away and be borne on the current out somewhere between Francis Joseph's Land and the eastern coast of Spitsbergen. Hour by hour the ice was melting, the dampness became most unpleasant, banks of fog frequently drifted in, and, the wireless being not entirely up to date, the communication was occasionally feeble, and at times even quite ineffective.

We looked at each other questioningly, but avoided asking direct questions. And day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, the tension increased. On the 18th of May, three years ago, on the very spot where the wireless group came down, there was open water which permitted the passage of ships. The *Krassin* was expected any day, but the position was not hopeful, as it was becoming more and more difficult to land on the hummocky ice, which in places had become quite sodden.

Nobody was anxious for a repetition of Lundborg's adventure—a sufficient number of lives had already been lost. The airmen of all nationalities were weighing their

chances, and such remarks were often heard as the one used on the occasion of Lundborg's landing on the ice : " He won't be the last one. More will disappear before all is over here."

It seemed obvious to all that only the *Krassin* could now effect a rescue. We knew that the ice-breaker was on its way north, and that, after having made clear for the journey in a couple of days, it had left Leningrad on June 14th. Officers and crew had been made up from other ice-breakers, mates acting as ordinary seamen, all accepting the position to which they were assigned. Anxious days and nights elapsed before we heard that the *Krassin* was nearing our latitude, and it is perhaps not to be wondered at that the Commandant of the *Città* on one occasion, when I asked him if he had heard anything about the *Krassin* having arrived in the neighbourhood, burst out with : " No, it is still leaving Bergen ! " On one hand, there were the Italians on White Bear Floe in their perilous situation—at any moment they might sink, or the five men who were left after Nobile's rescue might become separated, when a new danger would arise. On the other hand, all were waiting for the help which was to end the general tension and anxiety. Around the camp the ice was wearing thinner and thinner, the floe drifting about aimlessly with the current. It was impossible for an aeroplane provided with skis to land, and neither was there sufficient open water for the hydroplanes to make the attempt. And, besides all these desperate conditions, there was the terrible weather, impenetrable fog, gales, and snowstorms. The airmen were ready to start at any moment ; the Italians and the Swedish Junker were lying in Virgo Harbour, the rest of the Swedes in Hinlopen Strait, and the Norwegians by North Cape. But the hopeless weather gave rise to grave doubts as to whether it would be possible to save any of the wrecked men. It was obvious that the Italians wished to

have the entire work in connection with the rescue in their own hands. But it was equally obvious that one supreme leader was lacking, that there was no attempt at co-ordination. A man capable and experienced in Arctic conditions was needed—a Roald Amundsen, an Otto Sverdrup, or some other experienced man. The Russians were, of course, capable men, and they had with them, on board the *Krassin*, Hr. Hoel, who had been invited to join as an expert. They knew the Arctic, and they would be able to arrange the rescue work in an efficient manner. It was therefore not strange that, instead of calling in Virgo Harbour, as the Commandant of the *Città* had asked them to do, the Russians went straight north, in order to hasten the rescue. The Russians wished to operate according to their own ideas.

So the 10,500 horse-power *Krassin* steamed northward. At the end of June the ice-breaker was off the north coast, where it entered the ice outside Red Bay, having set a course between Seven Islands and North Cape in North-East Land. There it met ice of a thickness of over six feet. The *Krassin* might have been able to break its way through, but several other matters had to be considered—for instance, its 3,000 tons of coal might soon be exhausted if the vessel continued to force its way through thick ice. On June 2nd, the *Krassin* stopped by Cape Platen and turned westward again, making its way to the north of Seven Islands. Here it entered the pack-ice itself, and found very heavy going. There was nothing for it but to slow down to a mile or two an hour. Then a mishap occurred ; the *Krassin* lost a blade of its propeller. That was on July 3rd. The ice-breaker had, indeed, three screws, but in this satanical polar ice all the screws one possesses are indeed required ! The vessel was lying by a gigantic ice-floe, twenty-five miles north of Cape Platen, until July 6th. Then at last the *Krassin* left, and brought up by another large floe, some

kilometres farther away, to launch the flying machine, a three-engined Junker. But, as usual, one mishap crowds on top of another, and it was found that the rudder had suffered damage.

In several places the ice had been screwed up to the height of a house. The 10,500 horse-powered vessel worked like a being possessed. It was indeed a wonder that the ship hung together. It puffed, panted, groaned, shook, seethed, and hissed as it moved off, and when the ice was really heavy the *Krassin* shoved up on top of it, pressing the ice-blocks under. When snow covered the ice the vessel was almost powerless ; it was like sailing in sand. But where the ice was rotten the *Krassin* pushed through, however thick it was. It takes good nerves to stand such a journey. There was a banging and a shaking as the water in the tanks was pumped backwards and forwards every time the ice-breaker lifted itself for a lunge at its prey.

For four days the *Krassin* remained lying by the large ice-floe. It was no easy task to get the huge Junker down on the ice, and they had to construct a wide bridge from the ship down to the taking-off place. On July 8th, Chuknovsky made his trial flight. The machine set off on its strange-looking skis, reminiscent of snow-troughs ; but unfortunately one of the troughs assumed a vertical position when the machine had risen into the air, as one of the straps which held it broke. There was a great commotion on board—how would he be able to land ? They wirelessed to Chuknovsky, warning him of what had occurred. The thirty-year-old airman had landed several times before on the ice—in the Kara Sea, at Novaya Zemlya, and in other places—and he quite coolly made a descent, slowing down as much as possible so that the pressure of the air against the trough should not be too great, and so effected a landing quite prettily, the machine escaping with one broken trough. It was a case of quick repairs and then another attempt.

On July 10th, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Chuknovsky, the cinematographer Bluwstein, the airman Straube, the observer Alexeiev, and the mechanic Schelyagin flew eastward. Fog had then begun to drift in from the west, but nevertheless the five men left with sufficient petrol for a ten-hour flight. They made a course for Charles XII Island. The fog thickened, and on board the *Krassin* they could see nothing. The seamen made a bonfire on the ice, so that the flyers might be able to see where to land when they returned. A while later the wireless of the Junker sent the following message : " Malmgren. . . . " That was all that could be intercepted. What was the matter with Malmgren ? Had they picked him up ? Why did not the Russian flyers send another message ? Had disaster befallen them as well ? The leader of the *Krassin* expedition, Professor Rodolphe Samoilovitch, was himself listening in the wireless cabin for six hours before the problem was solved. The airmen reported that north-west of Broch Island they had seen the Malmgren group on the ice. There were three men, two standing and one lying down. The mechanic Schelyagin first spotted the men. It was his habit to sit watching the seals gliding into the sea at the approach of the machine, and on this occasion he was surprised to notice that they did not move. He looked at them more closely, and then shouted loudly, " Men ! " The cinematographer had his camera in readiness, and took several feet of film. The machine was flying at a height of between 150 and 600 feet. At a low altitude the flyers circled five times above the men, waving their hands to them, and the men on the ice waved back. Their position was 80° 42′ north and 25° 24′ east. Zappi had sewn some rags on a large piece of white material in the form of the words, " No food."

The flyers made a course for Stor Island, but they saw nothing of the wireless group. Immediately after the

discovering of the Malmgren group the fog became so thick that the airmen were forced to come down. They landed on the eastern side of Red Currant Bay, rather far inland, and during the landing the under-carriage was broken. Chuknovsky had originally intended to throw down provisions to Zappi and Mariano. Fortunately he had not done so. The floe they were standing on was not very large ; it was surrounded by water, and probably the provisions would have been lost. And now the five men in the aeroplane were themselves in great need of them.

They had five spare suits of clothes and food for five days. The airmen asked the *Krassin* to pick up the Malmgren group first, and see to them afterwards. The position of the men on the ice was reported as being five miles east-south-east of Charles XII Island.

At noon on the 11th the *Krassin* started on its eastern course, and the condition of the ice was then much better. On board the ship a prize of 150 roubles was offered for the first man who sighted the Malmgren group.

The mate, Brennkopf, was on the bridge when he caught sight of men on the ice ahead. There was at once great commotion on board. But only two men were to be seen on the ice, and the flyers had reported three. Where was the third ? The two men—they proved to be Mariano and Zappi—were on a floe about 20 by 45 feet in area, and the *Krassin* manœuvred with the greatest care to get near to the castaways without upsetting or splitting the floe. Professor Samoilovitch, the fireman Filipov, Ivanov, the secretary to the scientific expedition, and the mate Brennkopf went down, and by means of planks and step-ladders they bridged open channels and rotten ice.

Brennkopf asked Zappi in German : " Where is Malmgren ? "

Zappi did not reply to this question ; he merely pointed to the ice and the water.

The Russians searched the vicinity of the floe for Malmgren's corpse, but could not find it. Zappi then said: "Malmgren is at Broch Island."

"Then we will go there and search," said the Russians.

"That would be no use," Zappi replied. "Malmgren is not there either. He remained on the ice."

When Zappi arrived on board the *Krassin*, the Italian journalist Giudici was the first man to speak to him. The journalist asked Zappi: "Where is Malmgren?"

"He is dead."

The two Italians had seen the *Krassin* when it was ten kilometres away, and when the Russians were about 150 feet distant Zappi stretched out his arms and called, "*Krassin!*" Mariano was lying on the ice, and all they could see of him was his head and his right hand, which was waving to them. The two men had tied a rope between them so that they should not fall into the water. The only covering Mariano had for his feet were wet stockings. Zappi wore two pairs of shoes, underclothes and other good clothes, and he had also three watches.

The surface of the floe was very uneven, and was surrounded by water. On this unsafe spot Mariano and Zappi had built a kind of shelter of two blocks of ice to shield them from the wind. Of the two Zappi was in the better condition. He was walking about apparently unconcerned, whilst Mariano was unable to move. Zappi was even able to climb up, without the slightest difficulty and without aid, the nearly fifteen feet long ladder of the *Krassin*. Mariano, who had both feet frozen, was helped on board. It soon transpired that the affair had not had such a slight effect on Zappi as he had pretended. He gave the impression of being confused, and it was obvious that his nerves were not at all steady. Thus on one occasion he seized a plate of soup which had just been handed to him by a male attendant, and threw it in his face, giving as a reason that it was

not warm. When he spoke to the men on board he would sit with his eyes closed. But, whilst Zappi remained up and about, Mariano was put to bed with a high temperature. Naturally the two men looked dreadful—dirty and bearded. Mariano retained his beard for a long time. On the following day the reaction set in so far as Zappi was concerned, and he had to take to his bed for a couple of days, after which he seemed completely recovered.

All on board were enquiring after Malmgren. From the flying-machine three men had been seen on the ice, and Zappi and Mariano explained that it was Malmgren's flying-suit the airmen had seen, as they had laid the suit out on the ground so that they might more easily be seen from the air. The suit, however, was not lying on the floe on which the two men were standing. It was put out on a floe farther away, and in between the two floes there was a wide channel which the men could not cross.

The suit was later picked up by the *Krassin* ; but the riddle regarding Malmgren remained unsolved. Zappi's story was as follows :

The three men left the wireless camp on May 30th, and by the middle of June Malmgren was unable to carry on, as the toes of both his feet were frozen. Further, when the disaster occurred he had injured his shoulder. It seemed useless for the three men to continue, as they were drifting in every direction but south, which was their course. Their intention was to go to North Cape in North-East Land. They had set off before wireless communication with the outside world had been established, and thus they had no knowledge of what was being done to save their lives. Lately they had on several occasions seen aeroplanes above their heads, and had signalled frantically to them, but none of the airmen had noticed them until Chuknovsky had at last caught sight of them.

When Malmgren gave up he told his two companions to save themselves and the rest of the wireless group by continuing their march and informing the people in Spitsbergen of the disaster to the *Italia's* crew. Malmgren gave the two men his provisions, asking them to go on and find help. He also asked them to scoop out a trench for him in the ice, and this they did, putting him into it. They stopped about three hundred feet away to see whether he would not change his mind, but he waved to them to leave him. (Perhaps the question is worth considering as to whether they were quite clear as to what the waving in this case signified ? When the Italians are waving to somebody with their hands in a manner which to us would signify " go away," they mean that the person concerned should approach, and vice versa.)

Zappi further stated that he and his countrymen had not eaten for thirteen days, and that they were reduced to chewing the soles of their boots. But does this tally with Nobile's statement regarding the amount of provisions given to the Malmgren group when they set off on their fateful journey on May 30th ? The men were then provided with a hundredweight of chocolate, pemmican, and other food—in Malmgren's opinion, sufficient for a journey of forty days. A fortnight later Malmgren dropped out, the two men took, or were given, his share of the food, and still they had not eaten for thirteen days ! There is, of course, the possible explanation that the two Italians, unaccustomed to such conditions, allowed themselves larger rations in the beginning than they ought to have done. The physician on board the *Krassin*, who examined the two men after their rescue, was of the opinion that Mariano had been without food for five days, and Zappi for three. Mariano, for whose life some fear was entertained, was at first only given a little rum, and later on coffee and biscuits. Zappi was soon able to eat anything. He impressed

one as being a braggart, a man inclined to exaggerate enormously when telling a story.

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On board the *Krassin* the event was celebrated by the publication of an extra hectographed news-sheet, edited by the journalist Mindlin, of the paper *Vetyernaya* in Moscow, Guzgin of the *Krasnaya Pravda* in Leningrad, V. Zuchanoff of the *Leningradskaya Pravda*, Spanoff, Tschekerdekowitch, Rachmilowitch, Kabonoff, and a lady journalist, Miss Vorozova—I suppose I ought to have mentioned her first. The news ran as follows :

On Board the *Krassin*, July 12th, 1928.

" At five o'clock to-day the officer on duty, Brennkopf, sighted from the bridge the Malmgren group. At seven o'clock the ice-breaker was about three hundred feet away from the ice floe, which was no more than about thirty feet across, and on which men were seen. One of the men was standing, the other was lying down, raising his head occasionally. The men were two members of the *Italia* expedition, Zappi and Mariano. According to Zappi's statement, Malmgren himself had remained behind on the ice a month before. At the time of the disaster he had broken his arm, and later on during the march both his feet froze. Malmgren had asked them to continue alone. For thirteen days Zappi and Mariano had not tasted food. On July 10th they saw Chuknovsky's aeroplane, and waited for his return in the hope that food would be thrown down to them. They had not expected that a boat would arrive. Zappi saw the vessel when the *Krassin* signalled. He was quite well, but Mariano had had his toes frozen and was very weak and exhausted. Both the rescued men are now in the sick-bay of the ship."

The news items for this rare journal of the polar ice were partly produced by the men themselves, and partly derived from listening in to the European wireless stations. Such titles as the following were used : " The New Expedition " ; " The Lundborg Group on the Ice " ; " On board the *Malyguin* " ; " Maddalena's Position " ; etc., etc.

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Leaving the place where the two men had been rescued, the *Krassin* was obliged to manœuvre with the greatest care, as they were now in tricky waters, occasionally shallow and in other places very deep. In the vicinity of Foyn Island the first mate, Ponomoreff, discovered two men on the summit of the island. They were waving and signalling. It was immediately realised that the men could be no others than the dog-driver Van Dongen and Sora, the Captain of the Alpini. The *Krassin* hoisted signals informing them that they would be picked up when the vessel returned after having rescued the five men of the wireless group.

To find the other five men was a more difficult task. The *Città* did not know their exact position when the *Krassin* asked for it. But after a long search the *Krassin* managed to break through to the most famous ice-floe in the world—White Bear Floe. The ship's whistle had shrieked itself almost hoarse on its way to the five men, and these subsequently assured us that it was the sweetest music they had heard in their lives. The Italians let off smoke-bombs with which they had been provided by Maddalena and the Swedes. It was towards ten o'clock in the evening of July 12th that the rescue was effected. For some time the *Krassin* had been going through thick fog, and it was feared that it would be very difficult to find the Italians.

As the men on the ice did not know whether those on board the ice-breaker were aware of their position, they wirelessed to the *Città*, and in this indirect way told the *Krassin* how White Bear Floe could be reached. In reply to the hoots of the *Krassin's* syren the five men of the red tent fired shot after shot into the air, until the dead wastes reverberated. The *Città* told them that the *Krassin* was now steering towards them, but nevertheless they could hardly believe it when they saw the dark hull of the *Krassin* appear. A great uneasiness came upon them, and this was only overcome when it was clear beyond all doubt that the *Krassin* was really making straight for the camp.

In the middle of the floe, a thousand feet by six hundred in area, the red tent was standing, not far from Captain Lundborg's up-turned Fokker. The ice around the floe was much broken up, and smaller floes had been pushed up round the "home" of the Italians. The five men had both seen and heard the *Krassin* for several hours. Ceccioni, the magnificent chief engineer of the *Italia*, was leaning on his crutch when help arrived. Both on the floe and on board the Krassin many of the men were weeping with joy. The rescue from the embrace of the ice made the swarthy and dirty men's faces light up with thankfulness, whilst a feeling of quiet exaltation flooded their being. Professor Samoilovitch and the Commissioner Oras crossed to the ice-floe on planks, boards, and ladders. The men were picked up, Ceccioni being carried, whilst the rest were able to walk alone. The wireless operator Biagi appeared to be in better form than any of them. When at their worst he had kept them all alive with his little wonder-apparatus—the short-wave length station to which they all owed their rescue, for without the square little box with its buttons, wires, and screws they would have been death's certain prey. Now at last they were safe, after forty-nine days of fighting the elements, after hours, days, and weeks of

uncertainty regarding their fate. Civilisation had come to them in these icy regions, providing them with baths, clothes, and good food. The *Krassin* picked up the tent and everything that was lying about it, including Captain Lundborg's small Fokker.

After the rescue the fog once more set in, and for the time being the *Krassin* was obliged to remain where it was. The whole of the next day the crew of the ice-breaker were resting, but early in the morning of the 14th, although the fog did not lift, they continued their journey, and in the evening the vessel reached Red-Currant Bay, where they found Chuknovsky and his four companions. When the *Krassin* approached the airmen signalled by setting fire to a polar-bear skin which they had soaked in petrol. To begin with they had not had much food, but Straube fortunately encountered a polar bear which he killed. The cinematographer Bluwstein also shot a bear, and the wrecked men were now in a better position, as they had sufficient game to last them for months and they could live in the machine. But they found it difficult to skin the bears, for they had only their ordinary knives. They had no cooking utensils —here one must manage without such things, for there is no choice of ironmongers from whom pots and pans can be bought. The flyers tried cooking in a petrol-can, but both meat and water turned blue. Further, the men were afraid to eat the meat as it might have been poisoned by the lead and tin of the can. They had forgotten to bring salt, and when they wirelessed to the *Città*, which was sending some of their flyers with provisions, they asked specially for salt to be included. The flyers arrived, but they too had forgotten the salt ! Later on, when the *Città* asked the Russians whether there was anything more they needed, the reply was : " Only a little salt."

The hunter Nöis and three other men were sent from the *Braganza* to the Russians in Red-Currant Bay with

food and other necessaries. These four were picked up by the *Krassin*, and the vessel also took the damaged Junker aeroplane on board. In the morning of the 17th the *Krassin* left Red-Currant Bay, setting its course between Seven Islands and North Cape, meeting the *Braganza* east of Seven Islands. Nöis and the three men were then transferred to the other ship. The *Krassin* now wanted to continue the search for the *Latham* and the balloon group. When the ice-breaker asked the *Città* if it knew the approximate position of the balloon group, the reply was that there was no need for the Russians to search for these men, for it was believed on board the *Città* that they had all succumbed, as, on May 25th, the day of the disaster, a large column of smoke was observed emerging from the envelope of the balloon, which would seem to indicate that they were all dead. Further, Rome demanded that the rescued men should be conveyed immediately to New Aalesund. The *Krassin* was therefore forced to give up its plan of a further search. The mortification of Mariano's leg necessitated speedy medical aid, besides which the *Krassin* was in need of repairs.

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But the task was not yet at an end. There were still van Dongen and Sora to save. On the evening of the day when Mariano and Zappi and the five men of the wireless group were picked up, the Finns Sarko and Lihr set out in the same machine, whilst the Swedes Tornberg and Schyberg left Hinlopen in their military machines. After a flight of an hour and a half, partly through fog, the airmen sighted van Dongen and Sora. They had gone out on the ice, where they were standing waving frantically. All three machines landed in a channel of open water near the shore. Van Dongen was taken up by the Swedes, and Sora by the Finns. But the take-off was apparently not to be

FINNISH PLANE WHICH SAVED THE ITALIAN CAPTAIN SORA ALONGSIDE THE " CITTÀ DI MILANO "

effected without difficulty. The engine of the Finnish machine refused to start, and the channel was closing up. Ultimately they succeeded in setting the motor going, and all three aeroplanes took off. No sooner were the machines in the air than the channel closed entirely. In his happiness at being saved, Sora was singing the whole way to the Swedish relief ship *Quest* in Hinlopen Strait. On the following day the Finnish and the Swedish aeroplanes continued their journey to New Aalesund. Van Dongen was the same cheery soul after he was saved as on the night when he left us at New Aalesund with his team of magnificent animals, which he loved above everything else, and which loved him in return. He was a mere boy, only twenty-two years old, burnt almost black by the sun, and, with his crown of pitch-black curly hair, he resembled an African. He looked upon his march across the polar ice with Sora as a diversion in the daily round—it was nothing to speak of. His laugh was loud and hearty, a laugh that indeed "shook the house." For five years he had run the mail between Longyear Town and Braganza Mine in the south.

On June 18th Engineer Varming, van Dongen, and Sora left the *Braganza* with a team of nine dogs. Nero and Bernard were the leaders. When they got to Cape Platen Varming was attacked by snow blindness, and was left behind in his tent with food for a month. The other two men continued across the ice, and on the first day had covered a distance of 11 kilometres. The dogs were going at a pace that made it difficult for the men to keep up with them. Loaded on the sledges they had several hundred kilos of food and other goods, sufficient to last them for thirty days. One dog broke the trail, and was followed by one of the leaders and the remaining seven dogs. Every ten hours the leading dog was relieved. On the next day they again covered a distance of 11 kilometres, but, as the

channels of open water were many and large, they were obliged to freight the stores and the dogs across in pneumatic boats. Occasionally the leading dog would fall through the ice, and no less than five times van Dongen went down in icy mush up to his armpits. They zigzagged their way backwards and forwards, at times across mountains of screw-ice, at others squeezing along the bottom of a rift between the ice-mountains.

On the third day they encountered the polar ice itself, and on a march of 30 kilometres they endured terrible sufferings. When they finally reached Broch Island on the sixth day there were only four of the nine animals left alive. The rest they had been forced to shoot on the way, some of them serving as food. Through fog, rain, and sleet they struggled through the five kilometres from Broch Island to Foyn Island—a journey that took them thirty-one hours. A terrible blizzard was raging during the last three days of June. If the two brave men had encountered this whilst on the polar ice they would have succumbed. They struggled through snow-slush that reached to their hips, and the whole distance they managed to cover in one hour did not amount to more than a couple of hundred yards.

They were looking for Nobile's camp, which was supposed to be about ten kilometres away. The ice rocked under their tread as they tramped along ; the camp they could not discover. It had drifted away from the position which had been given them. Then the men returned to Foyn Island. Food was running low, so they killed two of the dogs and boiled the meat, which did not taste exactly like lamb ! They drank water out of match-boxes, and, as the dogs had chewed the aluminium pots to pieces, had to do their cooking in preserved-food tins.

On the day the *Krassin* appeared the two men waved like madmen from the summit of Foyn Island, which

DOG TEAM USED IN RESCUING NOBILE

measures about 450 feet. It was then that the *Krassin* signalled to them that they would be picked up on the return journey, but the two men did not understand the signal, and they feared that the *Krassin* had not seen them. Though they were two hardy men, they did not find it easy to keep up their courage, but finally their hour of rescue struck, the gates of their prison were opened, they were free !

Engineer Varming was left alone in his tent at Cape Brunn, stricken with snow-blindness—one of the many scourges of the Arctic. He had brought some of Wilkinson's provisions, among other things Setre biscuits and Freia chocolate. One day he was visited in his loneliness by an ice-bear, which sniffed him all over and put its snout right into his face. From his hip-pocket he quickly seized his revolver, and brought down the king of the icy wastes with a couple of well-directed shots.

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At the time when we were waiting for news of Amundsen other sad tidings reached us. We had reconciled ourselves to the idea that all kinds of disasters might happen to the flyers. It was so much more risky to fly up here than in most other places in the world. We had heard that the ice-breaker *Malyguin* was operating east of Spitzbergen, attempting to make its way between the archipelago and Francis Joseph's Land, and by this route to reach the Italians by Foyn Island. This ice-breaker carried a large aeroplane of the same type as the *Krassin's*. In the last days of June we heard that the *Malyguin* could not manage to force its way any farther through the ice, and that the airman Babushkin had therefore decided to attempt a flight to the camp of the wireless group.

A non-stop flight to White Bear Floe was out of the question. The airman therefore planned to land on King

Charles's Island and make a temporary base on the ice. There the sad story began. When the airmen—Babushkin, the mechanic Grochov, and the cinematographer Valento —landed near the Island, and there left one hundred litres of petrol in five cans, they meant to fly back to the *Malyguin*. The fickle weather, however, frustrated their plans. They had to accept the dictates of fate—they could not fight fog and driving snow. So they settled down on an ice-floe for the night, forty kilometres away from the mother ship. They slept by turns in the cabin of the machine, as the space only permitted one at a time to lie down. Those that were awake found an occupation in looking out for inquisitive ice-bears.

The fog lasted for more than twenty-four hours, and when the wireless communication failed their stay on the floe was obviously anything but pleasant. The cinematographer Valento killed time by filming the landing-place. After many weary hours the fog at last lifted, the flyers were able to take their bearings, and they returned to their friends on board the *Malyguin*.

Babushkin was not the kind of man to give in, and an involuntary stay on the ice for a day or two did not damp his spirits. He therefore set off again, this time intending to fly directly to Foyn Island, as he now had reserves at the depot on King Charles's Island for the return journey. The fog was lying within a few yards of the ice, and it was a case of flying so close to the ground as almost to shave the top of the ice hummocks. On this journey he was accompanied by the wireless operator Fominykh, so that the machine might communicate with the *Malyguin* during its flight, but the new motor which had been fitted threatened to fail, and there was nothing for it but to land on an ice-floe, and so the wireless was put out of action. Then followed another involuntary stay on the ice-floe of about 48 hours, the airmen being then approximately 120 kilometres north of

their ship. A gale began to blow and, as the floe was threatened with destruction, Babushkin was forced to take off in order to save himself. For about an hour they were flying aimlessly about, and then they were forced down once more, this time 30 kilometres from the strange eel-shaped island Hopen. The gale increased and the food gave out. This was a merry outlook ! But salvation came in the form of a huge ice-bear, which Babushkin allowed to approach quite close to the machine before he killed it.

On the fourth day the gale abated, and once more the machine took to its wings. Being doubtful as to whether they would be able to find their way back to the *Malyguin*, they were prepared for the worst, which, as things turned out, was just as well. They lost their direction, visibility was poor, and the petrol ran low. Again they landed on an ice-floe and spent the night there. The floe was small, and so thin that when the wireless operator went out to see about a matter regarding the propeller he fell through. Soaked to the skin, he was compelled to stay in the cabin until at last this dramatic flight from floe to floe was ended. The work on the ice and with the machine taxed both strength and nerve, but finally their toil was crowned with success, and after a flight of one hour and forty minutes the airmen were for the second time united with their anxiously awaiting countrymen on board the *Malyguin*.

We drew a sigh of relief when we heard of the return of the intrepid flyers, for indeed the list of lost lives was already long enough.

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Eight of the *Italia's* crew of sixteen were now saved. First Nobile and his dog, then Mariano and Zappi, and finally the five men on White Bear Floe, and now they were all making for New Aalesund, their point of departure on that fateful Wednesday morning, May 23rd.

The eight rescued men would again see the mining camp after long and terrible weeks of absence. In the early morning of July 19th the *Krassin's* sombre hull appeared off Cape Mitra, which has become so famous during the last few years of polar flights, for all have to round the Cape to get northward. Compact and heavy, the ice-breaker steamed up King's Bay, gaily decked with the Soviet flags, bearing the emblem of hammer and sickle. Large blocks of ice, shed from the glacier in the bay, were drifting round in the fjord, but that mattered little to a vessel like the *Krassin*, which simply bumped into them and pushed them aside on their lazy course.

But no festive spirit shed its glamour over the reunion. After an hour of manœuvring, the *Krassin* let go its anchor, and the grey launch of the *Città*, with Commandant Romagna Manoya on board, approached the Russian vessel. Soon the launch returned to the *Città*, cleaving its speedy way through the water. The crew crowded on deck, some took up positions in the lifeboats, others in the rigging or on the mast, eager to catch a glimpse of their returning comrades. In great excitement they shouted : " Look ! There is Trojani ! There is Viglieri ! Biagi ! Ceccioni ! " All the returning men were well wrapped up in furs, and it was difficult to recognise some of them. Ceccioni hobbled up the gangway on his crutch, refusing every offer of aid. His right leg was heavily bandaged, but when he arrived on deck he let fall his crutch whilst he embraced General Nobile, who had come out to receive them. Scarcely one eye was dry during this moving reunion.

Then the rest of the castaways arrived. Viglieri looked utterly spent and exhausted, while the Czech, Behounek, was the only man who attempted to smile. He was very much thinner than when last he was seen in the mining camp, but the loss of many pounds had done him no harm. He greeted us all in turn, saying jokingly in Italian, " Here

I am, back from my holiday." But at that moment no one was in the mood for joking, and we felt that even this innocent remark was out of place. Behounek's sister had arrived, and she tenderly embraced her brother. The scientist would now be returning home for his honeymoon with his Ludmila Felixowa. There was Zappi—thin and tall; and Professor Trojani in flying-suit. Mariano was not brought from the *Krassin* to the *Città* until later, as his foot and his high temperature necessitated the greatest quietness and care. On board the Italian ship his foot was subsequently amputated, and his condition was so critical that on several occasions the *Città* on its way to Norway had to slow down.

The *Krassin* brought with it as souvenirs the remnants of the pilot's cabin of the *Italia* and certain other articles found in the red tent camp, as, for instance, the steering-gear, the engine-room telephone, etc. The Russians also brought with them to New Aalesund the tent which had been the " home " of the castaways during their terrible period. It was much worn by wind and weather, and the red colour was practically washed out. Even the marvellous little short-wave-length apparatus, by the aid of which eight men of the *Italia's* crew were saved, was also brought away.

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During this depressing period certain things helped to lighten the dark days, not least among them being the arrival of messages from a helpful world, of men who unselfishly risked their own lives to aid their fellow-men in distress, and the fact that old animosities had been buried when men's lives were at stake. So the world was, after all, not so mean and miserable, not so narrow and harsh as we were often tempted to imagine. The better part of men's nature, courage, self-sacrifice, the supreme contempt of

mortal risks, came to the surface. Brave airmen of six nations hastened northward to do everything that was humanly possible to save the Italians. Above all other achievements stands out Roald Amundsen's part in this rescue work, for he knew better than anyone else the tremendous difficulties he might have to contend with, and, humanly speaking, he could not have been blamed if he had failed to go north, as the chief actor in the *Italia* tragedy had treated him anything but fairly after the trans-polar flight of the *Norge* two years previously.

Equally as praiseworthy as the resolute action of Roald Amundsen, his unhesitating and simple reply " Right away " when he was asked for help, was the Swede Finn Malmgren's heroism, which will be remembered throughout the ages. His name will for ever stand engraved on the scroll of polar fame. Although his heroic fight against ice, blizzards, and hunger ended in a tragedy, his part in the drama should be to us a torch of light, for by his self-sacrifice he showed us that there is no cause to despair of humanity, that hope and trust in it are justified. Through self-denial and self-sacrifice a new and better world will be created. In this Finn Malmgren showed us the way ; he was the shining example.

After the disaster the nine men on White Bear Floe discussed many possibilities and projects. Mariano and Zappi proposed to attempt to reach land to bring help, and the wireless operator Biagi wanted to join them. But Malmgren suggested that Biagi should remain where he was. Possibly wireless communication would be effected, in which case he could advise the world as to the fate of his comrades. " But," he said, " if Biagi wishes to go I will remain behind. Whatever you feel would be most helpful to you I shall do." Nobile wanted them all to remain in the hope that wireless communication would be effected. He was the leader, it was for him to decide. But on May 30th

he at last yielded to Malmgren, Mariano, and Zappi. Their outfit was meagre, but, according to Malmgren's calculation, they had sufficient food for forty days. They were also provided with two daggers and one axe, but they had neither tent nor sledge, nor a pneumatic boat in which to cross the numerous channels. Their hundredweight of provisions consisted chiefly of pemmican and chocolate. After the catastrophe Malmgren carried his left arm in a sling made out of a towel ; he tried to do without it, but in vain. Before he set off he said : " Time is short. Not an hour must be lost."

So the three set off in the evening of the 30th of May. The parting from their comrades was painful. All the men who remained behind sent their love to their families. From White Bear Floe they watched Malmgren, Zappi, and Mariano go towards Foyn Island, from where they were to attempt to reach North-East Land.

It was a march for their lives. Small specks on the ice, they drifted in every direction, and although they were making for the south they were drifting north, west, and east with great speed. They went from floe to floe, were driven out of their course by open water, zigzagged their way as long as their strength permitted, fighting the depression which repeatedly threatened to overwhelm them, fighting the evil powers of the weather, fighting the violent elements of Nature which were at their terrible play in this desert of ice, where so many men have found an unknown grave. . . .

When we in New Aalesund received the news that the three men had left the wireless camp, we were all agreed that Malmgren was the most likely man to win through. He was neither large nor really robust, but his tenacity, his toughness, his unshakable faith in their ultimate success, and his knowledge of the ice would surely bring him safe to land with his comrades, if only these two could

manage to hold out. We did not know that he had been injured at the time of the accident, that when setting out to bring aid to others he himself was an invalid.

We often spoke about this faithful friend and cheerful companion of ours. We remembered so well his quick steps when something was toward, his repeated night-watches which did not seem to impair his equanimity. We talked of his joviality when he was amongst us, his friends. On one occasion, I remember, he was discussing the well-known scientists of Sweden with Professor Pontremoli. Pontremoli said, " Professor Nordenskiöld of Gottenburg is a scientist of repute ; he is well-known in Italy."

" Oh," said Malmgren, with a glint in his eye.

" You don't think so ! "

" Oh, yes, I dare say."

" What do you mean by that ? "

" Well, I can't very well stand here boasting of my future father-in-law ! "

During the search for the wireless group the three men were not forgotten. The flyers were scanning the northern regions, and the dog-drivers Tornberg and Nöis had departed in the middle of June to cross North-East Land from Wahlenberg Fjord, in order to search for the three and to cache supplies along the northern coast of this inhospitable country, consisting almost entirely of inland ice, a place visited by men only a few times before, a land which hunters commonly call " North-East Hell." But they all returned with the same message—" Not a sign of the three."

The position with regard to the three men began to look serious. We knew what outfit they had—or, rather, what outfit they lacked—for their risky tour across the ice. Experts who had solved many of the problems of the ice during long years spent in the north shook their heads and preferred not to discuss what might have happened.

Gradually we tried to reconcile ourselves to the thought that we would never again see Malmgren and his two companions—there would be one more unsolved riddle.

Then it was reported that Chuknovsky had seen three men 80° 42′ north and 25° 24′ east, and that they had been picked up by the *Krassin*. That is, two of them, for the third was reported to be merely a flying-suit. This flying-suit has given rise to much discussion. The statements regarding it contain many discrepancies. Was it really Malmgren who was lying on the ice? Thus Nobile states in a telegram from the *Città* dated July 13th, the day after the two men were saved: "As their second *blanket* was lying on the ice, the Russian airmen were of the impression that there were three men on the ice." Thus we see that the flying-suit has turned into a blanket!

All that is known about Finn Malmgren's last days is what Mariano and Zappi have told us. No one else knows anything. Regarding the death-march across the devilish polar ice they stated—it was mostly Zappi who stated—immediately after they had been taken on board the *Krassin*: "After we had been wandering about on the ice for two weeks Malmgren could no longer endure the toilsome march and we had to leave him behind. We endured great privations. If we did make a slight progress towards the shore, we immediately drifted back again northward. It was on June 16th,[1] a few miles south-east of Broch Island, that Malmgren gave out. He asked us to leave him and to take all the provisions with us.

"Malmgren asked us to dig a grave for him in the ice before we left him, and in this grave he laid himself down. He then handed us his compass, asking us to give it to his mother.

"We then left.

[1] On another occasion Zappi mentioned a different date, and said: "Neither Mariano nor I kept a diary, so that I cannot definitely assert that it was on June 12th that Mariano and I left Malmgren."

" About twenty-four hours later—we were no more than about a hundred yards away—we saw Malmgren raise his head. We thought that perhaps hunger had driven him to make one more attempt, and we hoped that he would follow us. We therefore waited for him. When Malmgren saw this he called : " Go on, go on ! You can save the others by leaving me to die."

The two others were of the opinion that after that there was nothing to be done but to continue, and they brought Malmgren's flying-suit away with them.

Thus died a hero, a self-sacrificing man, lonely and forsaken, left to his terrible fate by those who should have been his friends unto death. Through all time Finn Malmgren will appear as a figure of romance, round which the northern lights of the polar night will shed their radiance.

As his two companions left the suffering and dying man, the most beautiful words in the world quietly passed his lips, " Mother, mother ! "